CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY SINCE 1971 | JANUARY 24, 2019

READER

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Black exodus

Between 2010 and 2017, Chicago saw the loss of black residents at higher rates than other major cities. Is the city's segregation to blame?

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THIS WEEK

CHICAGO READER | JANUARY 24, 2019 | VOLUME 48, NUMBER 16

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

WE'RE HEADING into our third week of intensive election coverage here at *Reader* HQ, and it's starting to get weird. Unexpected missives from public offices, strange requests from elected officials. A refreshing enthusiasm for speaking to our reporters, on the record and in depth. It's a big difference from our usual goings-on, which largely focus on the cuteness of certain dogs and whether or not we should hyphenate "face sitting." Should all return to normal by May.

In this issue Maya Dukmasova gives us her piercing look at the 13th Ward—Michael Madigan Country. The Illinois house speaker's officemate, longtime alderman Marty Quinn, is the popular candidate, or so the volume of signage in the ward would have us believe. But Quinn's got a challenger this year—a 19-year-old college student—and residents aren't entirely ignoring the new kid. Isn't election season just the most fun?

We're also looking at the mayoral race, and we've got a short interview with candidate Amara Enyia by Ben Joravsky. In it, she outlines a few of her ideas. For a broader view of her campaign, we sent comics reporter Anya Davidson out to an event in Edgewater put on by some of her north-side supporters.

Of course we're always thrilled to bring new writers to our pages, and Pete Saunders's cover story this issue is a timely and compellingly argued demand to look more closely at the city's legacy of segregation. Our look at the Chicago Independent Venue League (CIVL) is no less thoughtful, and its suggestion that city policy could be much more protective of our local music scene is deeply appreciated by those of us who came up in the clubs and bars of CIVL.

Quick correction: last week we incorrectly identified the Rogers Park clothier known to snakeskin-boot enthusiasts and steer-horned belt buckle fans as Jessica's Western Wear.

Finally, I can announce with intense gratitude and no small amount of love that our very own Kate Schmidt has returned to the office! That refreshing, clean text feeling washing over you right now? That's her work. We've missed it, and her, terribly. Welcome back, Kate!

—**Anne Elizabeth Moore**

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On the cover: Illustration by Simone Martin-Newberry. For more of Martin-Newberry's work, go to heysimone.com.

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SIGHTSEEING

Openhearted integration

Physician Daniel Hale Williams was a pioneer in many ways.

Daniel Hale Williams COURTESY COOK COUNTY HEALTH

AT THE INTERSECTION of 29th and Dearborn, down by [Daniel Hale] Williams Park in the Douglas community area, stood the Provident Hospital and Training School Association. There, pioneering African-American physician Daniel Hale Williams both established the first integrated hospital and performed the first successful open-heart surgery.

Williams was born in Pennsylvania in 1856 and graduated from what is now known as Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in 1883. He treated whites and African-Americans, but segregation prohibited him from working in a hospital, so he helped to establish Provident. In 1890, Armour & Company provided the down payment to purchase a three-story, 12-bed facility in Douglas. On January 23, 1891, Provident was established with a charter "to maintain a hospital and training school for nurses in the City of Chicago, Illinois, for the gratuitous treatment of the medical and surgical diseases of the sick poor." Williams served as the chief of staff. He later helped establish the National Medical Association in 1895, when the American Medical Association was still segregated.

On July 9, 1893, James Cornish, an African-American train expressman, was stabbed in the chest in a bar fight and was taken to Provident, which unlike most hospitals of the time admitted African-Americans. The wound initially appeared superficial to Williams. Overnight, however, Cornish's heartbeat grew weaker.

On July 10, Williams sutured Cornish's pericardium, the double-walled membrane that surrounds the heart. He worked without the benefit of blood transfusion, which would not be used widely until Austrian Karl Landsteiner identified the A, B, and O blood types in 1901. Williams did adopt the newfangled use of antiseptics. Cornish recovered and was able to leave the hospital 51 days later.

Some credit Catalonian physician Francisco Romero with the beginning of cardiac surgery in 1801; others grant the honor to French military surgeon Dominique-Jean Larrey during the Napoleonic Wars in 1810. Henry C. Dalton is also rumored to have performed a surgery similar to Williams's at Saint Louis City Hospital in 1891.

None of these events, however, diminish Williams's 1893 achievement in performing a successful open-heart surgery more than a century prior to the invention of the YouTube tutorial. Consider him the first Chicagoan to perform one to boot! **—JOE MASON**

SHOP WINDOW

One-stop Senegalese shop

Come for the colorful textiles and raw black soap, stay for the food.

Gorée Shop
1122 E. 47th
773-398-3580

ISA GIALLORENZO

"IT'S LIKE ALL Africa in one shop," says Adama Ba, the owner of Gorée Shop in Kenwood.

He established his storefront, named after an island in Senegal, in 2002. "It's great to be in a place where I can see Africans, Indians, Chinese, cultures from all over the world," he says. The 41-year-old studied arts and design for eight years at Senegal's Cheikh Anta Diop University and makes many of the traditional garments he sells. "Over there we don't use patterns, so everything you do you have to memorize." His clients often have outfits custom-made for special occasions, a service that costs between $150 and $200. Customers can choose from a wide array of colorful fabrics—mudcloth, asoke, bazin, and 100 percent cotton wax print textile—imported from nations like Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, and the Ivory Coast, and stacked in piles in the store.

Ba has dressed *American Idol* contestant Naima Adedapo, as well as dancers from the Najwa Dance Corps of Malcolm X College and Maryland's KanKouran West African Dance Company; the latter sported his creations during a White House performance for George W. Bush. Gorée Shop also sells musical instruments like the kora, a West African harp, and cosmetics such as raw black soap and whipped shea butters with names like Black Woman, Pure Seduction, and I Am King.

Ba says he wants Chicago to find joy in Senegalese culture, which is why he also runs the restaurant Gorée Cuisine next door. The *Reader*'s Mike Sula wrote that the Senegalese soul food on offer "might seem unfamiliar on paper, but it bridged the Atlantic hundreds of years ago with the arrival of the first African-Americans."

With the help of three siblings and his wife, Ba runs his business in keeping with Senegal's family-centered ethos. "People coming from different tribes and religions enjoy each other's traditions. There's no tension," he says. "The whole point of having the shop and the restaurant is to let the community know there are other cultures in their neighborhood. You don't need to go to Senegal to eat Senegalese food or to get African garments. You can just come to 47th Street." **—ISA GIALLORENZO**

Bully Life Animal Services
2N441 County Farm Rd.
West Chicago, Illinois
331-251-9133

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Must love rescue dogs

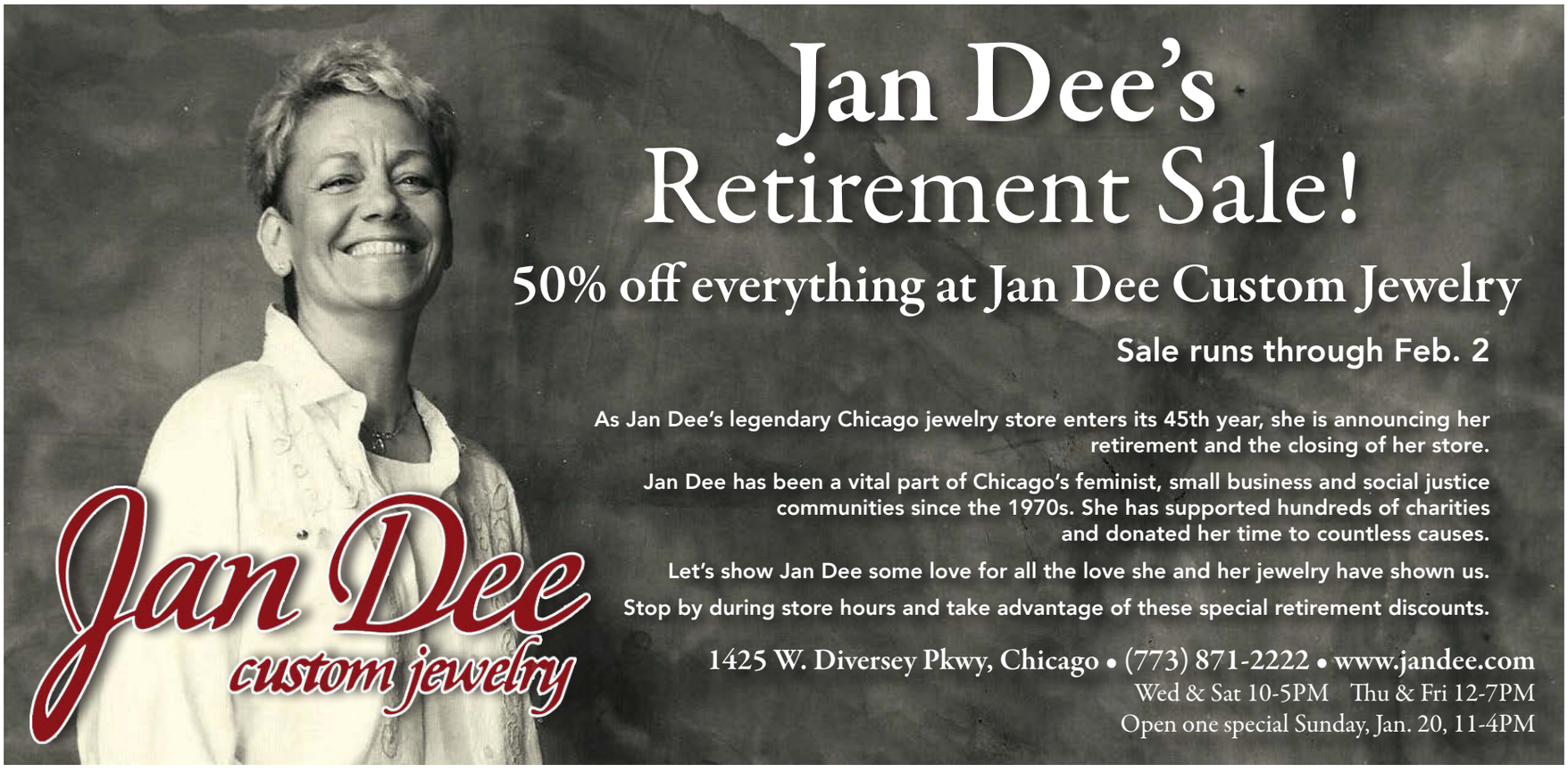
A tragic fire brings the spotlight to animal shelters.

Rescue Lynda survived the fire and has landed a foster home after being in boarding for eight months. She's available for adoption.
COURTESY FETCHING TAILS FOUNDATION

LAST WEEK, ANIMAL lovers throughout the Chicago area were devastated by the news that a fire at Bully Life Animal Services (formerly known as D&D Dog Kennel), near the suburb of West Chicago, had taken the lives of more than 30 dogs. Firefighters were able to rescue over 20 more dogs.

The cause of the fire is under investigation. Owner and operator Garrett Mercado, who lived in an apartment in the building, arrived home after the fire had started, and sustained injuries while opening hot cages. In addition to losing many of the animals he was boarding, he lost his business, his home, and all but one of his own pets in the blaze. Each of those details is tragic, but to make matters even more heart-wrenching, Mercado specializes in housing dogs with behavioral issues or who have suffered previous abuse. A number of local pet rescues, including Pets and Vets USA (which provides job training and opportunities for homeless military veterans to work with dogs), place animals with him to get the training and support needed to be housed with foster families—and ultimately, their forever homes.

In the aftermath of the fire, a spotlight was put on animal rescues throughout the Chicago area. Though some shelters work with outside kennels and have a network of foster parents and volunteers, rescues are unique in that they are typically volunteer run and without a central location for operations or animal housing. The loss of a boarding facility can have a ripple effect throughout the pet rescue community—and the loss of Bully Life Animal Services, which performs vital support for struggling animals who are not yet ready to be placed with a family, is particularly difficult. Mercado's friends and colleagues have launched a GoFundMe page to help him heal from his injuries and get back to his work. It's a great time to consider donating to any upstanding animal rescue throughout the city—or maybe even adopting a new furry friend. **—JAMIE LUDWIG**



POLITICS

A tale of two mayoral forums

The *Tribune*'s editorial board and the city's grassroots activists might as well be on different planets.

By Ben Joravsky

If there's still anyone out there who doubts that Chicago's a divided city, I urge you to compare and contrast two mayoral endorsement sessions that happened to take place on the same day last week—one at the *Tribune*'s downtown office, the other at a west-side church.

It goes beyond a tale of two cities. Stylistically and substantively the two might as well be different planets.

The *Trib* session took place in the corporate setting of the paper's editorial boardroom. The candidates sat at one end of a long table, and the editorial board members—most of whom are right of center—sat on the other side, respectfully listening.

In contrast, the mayoral forum hosted by the Grassroots Collaborative—an association of activists from all over town—was more like a boisterous rally. Organizers packed New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in West Garfield Park with activists bused in from Englewood, Roseland, Logan Square, Brighton Park, and other neighborhoods.

They distributed green and red pieces of paper for audience members to wave when they agreed (green) or disagreed (red) with what the mayoral candidate was saying.

Before the forum began, they blasted "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now," "Wake Up Everybody," and other great songs of the 70s over the loudspeakers. In case anyone needed to be fired up.

Now, I'm not saying *Trib* publisher Bruce Dold and star columnist John Kass should perform an air-guitar rendition of "Free Bird" at their next endorsement session, like it was 1975 and they were jamming with their pals in the basement. But fellas, if the spirit moves you—be my guest.

In general, the *Trib*'s editorial board reflects the view from a downtown corporate boardroom. They're like bankers sternly reviewing a loan application, somberly demanding how the applicant will pay for things that, let's face it, the *Trib*'s editorialists probably don't want in the first place.

Like our current pension system that pays retirees a relatively decent check.

Generally left unmentioned at these sessions is how the city can afford to hand over $1.7 billion in property taxes to developers. As Mayor Rahm's proposing with his TIF-funded plan to build upscale housing in gentrifying areas (yes, I'm referring to Lincoln Yards and the 78, aka Rezko Field).

Apparently, pensions for the middle class are a burden, but TIF handouts for the wealthy are an investment, at least from the perspective of the corporate boardroom.

"Efforts to cut government costs were a popular idea at the *Tribune* forum, a time-honored approach for candidates who know tax-weary voters are fans of lowering City Hall spending rather than digging deeper into their pockets" is how the *Tribune*'s news account of the editorial meeting phrased it.

Over at New Mount Pilgrim Missionary, meanwhile, there was no talk of gutting pensions. Many in the audience view those as direct payments to people who live and shop in the communities they represent.

Quite the contrary, this group advocated raising taxes on the wealthy and redistributing TIF funds away from gentrifying or wealthy communities.

They billed the event the #ReimagineChicago Mayoral Forum, the first step in drafting a platform intended to "break the pattern of neighborhood disinvestment, gentrification, and displacement" by creating a city "free of racist policies, discrimination, and crooked favors for the rich and well connected."

As one speaker, Ashley Galvan Ramos, a 19-year-old youth leader for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, put it: "We imagine a city where neighborhoods get what they need—don't pretend the money is not there."

I'll say this for the Tribsters—they invited all the mayoral candidates to their endorsement sessions. The Grassroots organizers were more selective, limiting invitations to candidates who already appealed to their constituents.

Onstage at the church were Amara Enyia, La Shawn Ford, Lori Lightfoot, Toni Preckwinkle, and Willie Wilson (Susana Mendoza was invited, but she sent her regrets claiming she was under the weather).

Last week's #ReimagineChicago Mayoral Forum, hosted by the Grassroots Collaborative at New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in West Garfield Park

SARA JANE RHEE/COURTESY GRASSROOTS COLLABORATIVE

As much as I enjoyed the forum, I'd have invited all the candidates—establishment figures Garry "Big Mac" McCarthy, Paul Vallas, Bill Daley, and Gery Chico included—if I'd had any say in the matter.

Obviously, I have about as much influence on how the Grassroots Collaborative runs its events as I do on what the *Tribune* writes in its editorials.

Much of the forum was dedicated to moving testimony from residents—like the woman who talked about how she battled suicide after the city closed several mental health clinics.

Parents talked about the devastating impact of school closings and the rising cost of gentrification, which is forcing many residents out of neighborhoods they've lived in for years. That's a pattern that will accelerate if the City Council rubber-stamps the mayor's plans for Lincoln Yards and Rezko Field.

Dramatically speaking, the highlight came near the end of the forum, during the round of rapid-response, yes-or-no questions. The candidates were asked whether they support committing at least $25 million to reopening the mental health clinics that Rahm closed; whether they support free tuition at city colleges and an end to CPS's student-head-count-based funding (so schools don't have to fire teachers if enrollment falls); and whether they'd delay action on the pending TIF projects until after the election. I was the guy in the back waving two green cards when they asked that one.

All the candidates answered yes to each.

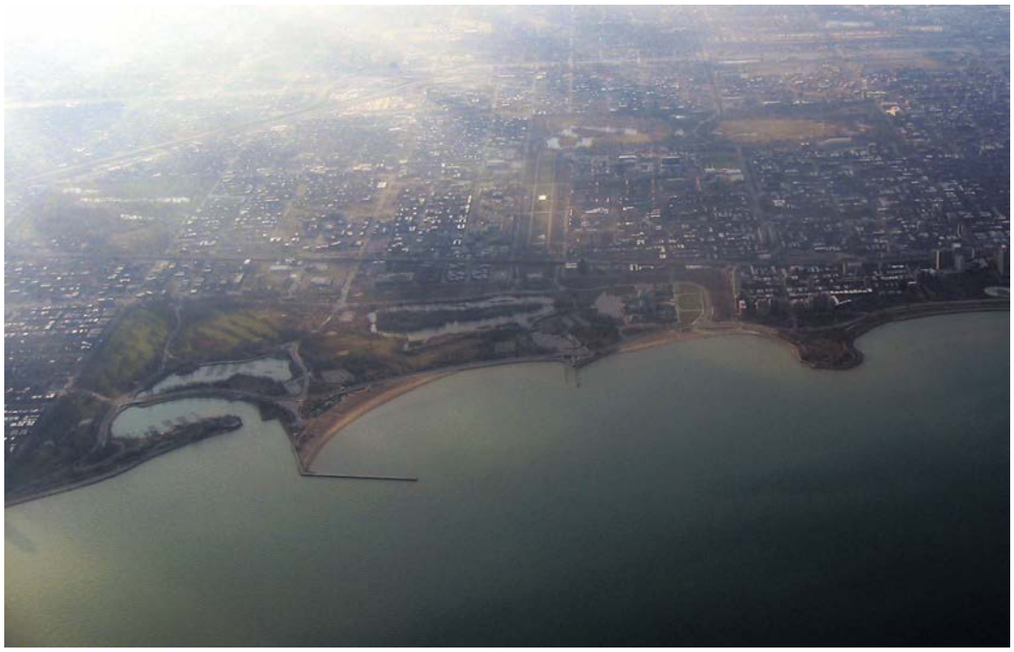
They closed the forum by asking candidates to sign a pledge that among other things would commit them to putting at least one member of the coalition on their transition team.

All but Wilson signed that pledge. He said he'd have to give it more thought.

Here's some more unsolicited advice for the Grassroots Collaborative leaders that they're free not to follow . . .

Keep up the pressure. If history's any judge, promises made to activists will be the first our next mayor breaks—if nothing else to stay in good graces with the *Trib*.

@joravben



Jackson Park
DAVID B. GLEASON

ON CULTURE

The Obama Center will have its (Valentine's) day in court

Will the presidential library be allowed in Jackson Park?

By Deanna Isaacs

It was Halloween when the Chicago City Council gave final approval to the deal that will allow the Obama Presidential Center to be built in Jackson Park, and it'll be Valentine's Day when a federal district court judge hears oral arguments on a lawsuit trying to bring that deal to a halt.

The city and the Chicago Park District have asked Judge John Robert Blakey to throw out a lawsuit filed against them that objects to the use of Jackson Park for the center. Protect Our Parks (POP), the group that brought the suit, has responded, and a flurry of legal briefs on behalf of outside parties has been filed in support of each side.

POP argues that it's illegal for the Park District to transfer nearly 20 acres of the historic park to the city in order for the city to, in effect, flip that land to the Obama Foundation, which will make a token onetime payment of $10 for its use for 99 years.

Since the Obama Center's breaking with tradition by not serving as the repository for the actual presidential papers (they'll be kept elsewhere by the National Archives), and therefore won't be a government facility, POP claims that this deal is a transfer of protected public land to a private party without appropriate compensation. POP also objects to the use of this public asset for what it assumes will be partisan purposes.

POP suggests that other south-side locations would be less disruptive and costly (taxpayers will be on the hook for road reroutes and other infrastructure expenses that the city has estimated at $175 million), and would bring greater benefit to local residents and businesses.

The city, on the other hand, says it'll retain ownership of the land and the three-building center, and that the Obama Foundation will merely be developing and operating it. The city also maintains that the center will bring benefits to Chicago citizens that will compensate for the loss of parkland and any taxpayer expense.

Supporting briefs include one by a group of property law professors (from Northwestern, the University of Chicago, Notre Dame, Columbia University, and Chicago-Kent) arguing that the city's deal is "consistent with public trust doctrine," and another by New York University and U. of C. law professor (and fellow at the conservative Hoover Foundation) Richard A. Epstein, who says it's not. Noting that Mayor Rahm Emanuel was President Obama's chief of staff, Epstein argues that "the transaction at issue is a classic circumstance of an insider favoritism."

Briefs supporting the city have also been filed by the foundations that operate the 13 existing presidential libraries, and by Chicago's group of 11 Museums in the Park; both argue that the Obama Center's purpose and situation is similar to their own. The Museums in the Park warn that the POP suit, if successful, could endanger them all.

A counterargument in a brief filed by Jackson Park Watch and Preservation Chicago claims that any suggestion that parkland was given up for those museums is fake history: what actually happened was that the museums went into existing buildings, were built on the sites of prior buildings, or preceded the parks that grew around them.

According to the Jackson Park Watch and Preservation Chicago brief, four of the 11 members of Museums in the Park took over existing buildings (the Museum of Science and Industry, the DuSable Museum, and the National Museums of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture and Mexican Art); three were built on the site of prior buildings (the Art Institute, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum); and four were built outside of existing parkland (the Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium, and Chicago History Museum).

"In all those situations," Preservation Chicago executive director Ward Miller told me, "we didn't give up precious parklands. We just feel there could be a better solution [for the Obama Center]."

A brief filed by the Cultural Landscape Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., notes that Jackson Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted wrote in 1894 that "the Museum of Science and Industry was to be the only 'dominating object of interest' in the park," and warns of setting a dangerous land-grab precedent.

Maybe Judge Blakey will be won over by that argument, or by those that say the deal needs more scrutiny. Or maybe he'll be thinking this can't set a precedent for taking other parkland, since there will be no more first black presidents of the United States. Maybe he'll remember that Jackson Park suffered an arguably worse blow when its scenic drive was turned into a six-lane speedway in the 1960s. And maybe he'll figure that if the Obama Presidential Center's 235-foot tower turns out to be a visually disruptive presence on a historic landscape, the symbolism will be right on.

Stay tuned.

@Deannaisaacs

POLITICS

Somebody somebody sent

After nearly three decades without a choice for alderman, the 13th Ward contemplates a non-machine option.

By Maya Dukmasova

Yard signs for the incumbent, as far as the eye can see. MAYA DUKMASOVA

Either the residents of the 13th Ward are inordinately passionate about their current alderman, or they don't much care if he sticks his signs in their yards. Last week I drove through the far southwest-side ward that covers much of Clearing and some of Garfield Ridge, hugs the south end of Midway Airport, and flares into West Lawn and West Elsdon like a jagged spur. As I crisscrossed its bungalow-lined streets, neat rows of signs sprang from tiny front yards, aligned with military precision as far as the eye could see. Every last one happily proclaimed, "Marty Quinn!"

From the level of inundation you'd think there was no other candidate. But perhaps it's precisely because there is one that Quinn, a two-term incumbent, is making sure his name is everywhere. For the first time since 1991, the 13th Ward—whose Democratic committee is chaired by the state's all-powerful house speaker, Michael J. Madigan—has a contested election. It's a year when Quinn, seen by many as Madigan's right-hand man, could face unusual challenges. When his former protege Alaina Hampton came forward last year to reveal Quinn's brother Kevin (also a top aide to Madigan) had sexually harassed her through texts, the alderman caught heat for his handling of the situation. Quinn's opponent is 19-year-old DePaul freshman David Krupa, and a handful of houses in the ward have even dared to break the monotony of Quinn's white-and-blue signs with Krupa's bright orange ones.

Back on Election Day 2016, Krupa was energetically waving a Trump flag in front of a polling place on 63rd Street. At the time he was 17, but when he launched his aldermanic run last summer he e-mailed to admit that he'd lied and told me he was 18 because he'd wanted to get in the newspaper. "I am going to be seeking a run for public office soon and this article may hinder my chances of success for various reasons," he wrote, "So, I'm asking that you would please take it down or edit me out of it."

Our responsibilities as a newsroom do not allow for such concessions, but we did sit down for an interview with Krupa on Election Day last November. He'd told me in 2016 that he was a "day one" Trump supporter and that he hoped the candidate would usher in tough-on-crime measures to stem "inner-city" violence, but Krupa now said he'd been drawn to Trump only for his "antiestablishment" persona. "I didn't really subscribe to Trump's ideology as much as I subscribe to the fact that he was an outsider trying to break the current political machine." He added that his political views are more in line with Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Kash Jackson, though he ran as an independent in the ward because he felt he'd have the best chance to make the ballot that way. He was confident of his ability to garner support in the Latinx community that has grown in the eastern part of the ward.

Krupa had interned in Quinn's ward office in the summer of 2015. With a note of indignation, he said that he "learned a lot of legal loopholes" there, like the age-old machine tactic of emblazoning informational flyers and signs about ward services with incumbents' names to campaign in the off-season.

I hoped to catch up with him last week to talk about the campaign as well as allegations that he had harassed and manipulated a high school girlfriend, which surfaced last December. I also wanted to ask about the status of the Cook County state's attorney and U.S. attorney's investigations into alleged fraud committed by the Quinn campaign as it tried to knock Krupa off the ballot. Though Krupa had filed 1,703 nominating petition signatures with the board of elections, Quinn's campaign submitted 2,796 sworn affidavits from 13th Ward residents revoking their signatures for Krupa—and only 187 of the names overlapped, Krupa's lawyer had found. Following these revelations, Quinn's campaign withdrew its objection to Krupa being on the ballot. The board referred the matter to prosecutors for criminal investigation.

Alas, Krupa didn't respond to the *Reader*'s calls this time, nor to knocks on his campaign office door. But a few doors down, at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting hall, several people were game for conversation.

Jim, 63, didn't want to give his last name, but offered me a cup of coffee and said he'd moved to the ward about five years ago. He said he's generally happy with ward services and doesn't have any gripes with Quinn. He didn't give it much thought when a precinct captain knocked on his door last November and asked him to sign something against Krupa. But it gave him pause when the captain came back with a notary and asked him to sign a second time.

"I said, you know what, if you want him off the ballot that bad . . . I think I'll just pass." Jim said he didn't know that he was being asked to sign an affidavit swearing he was withdrawing his signature of support for Krupa's nomination to the ballot. He'd never signed anything for Krupa to begin with. He couldn't understand why Quinn would be worried about a 19-year-old opponent. "I'm not even for him or against him, but he has a right to run if he wants to," Jim said, surmising that Quinn's "scared because [Krupa's] got somebody that's backing him."

Yet besides one from ultra-right-wing state rep and former gubernatorial candidate Jeanne Ives, Krupa hasn't attracted any high-profile endorsements. He's only got about $5,500 to campaign, state election board records show. Quinn, meanwhile, has long worked for Madigan's political organizations in addition to being alderman. He was first elected in 2011 after his predecessor, Madigan ally Frank Olivo, abruptly retired, leaving Quinn alone on the ballot. Currently his war chest holds $100,000, but he's got access to a constellation of Madigan campaign funds that total more than $14 million. Perhaps Jim was right to be surprised that a guy described as "Madigan's muscle" and "the General," who's worked some of the most successful political campaigns in recent Illinois history (from Lisa Madigan's 1998 run for state senate to Juliana Stratton's 2016 run for state rep), would spend so much time and energy fighting a challenge from a neophyte.

Yet although he was nearly suborned into perjury by Quinn's allies, Jim said he'd probably still vote for the incumbent—if he voted. "I should vote but somehow I don't," he said apologetically.

Elsewhere in the ward, S. Smith, a white, 47-year-old mother of two who usually votes Republican, said she was approached by Quinn's precinct workers multiple times in one weekend to sign an affidavit revoking her signature supporting Krupa's nomination for the ballot. She said she refused and took their persistence as a sign of Quinn's inability to listen.

Smith said she likes Krupa because "he presents himself that he really cares about the neighborhood," and views his lack of experience in politics as a good thing. She has one of his signs on her front lawn, as do six other houses on her block. Sixteen homes had Quinn signs, but Smith said that doesn't say much about her neighbors' views. "I believe Marty Quinn's people put them in the yards without asking people, because they've done that to me in the past."

David Krupa MAYA DUKMASOVA

Her biggest concern is rising crime, which she attributed to the increase in renters and lower-income people with Section 8 vouchers moving into the area. "It can bring a lower level of . . . ," she paused to think, "economics to our area. And I don't want to sound horrible, but that brings in crime."

As she unloaded large packages of snack-size chips and cases of sports drinks from her minivan, grousing at her kids to do their homework, Smith described herself as an involved citizen of the ward. She said she'd never seen or met Quinn but has the impression that he doesn't care even about basic problems, like street maintenance.

"I drive down my nonsnowplowed street, through the potholes, and think, 'hmmm, what is he doing for me?,' and it doesn't seem to be much," she said of Quinn. "I think he's a lot of talk."

A couple miles away I got the opposite appraisal of the alderman from a longtime server at the cozy Top View Restaurant. Chandra Donaldson, 43, gushed about how happy she was to live in a collar county and said she has to keep her fierce Republican proclivities to herself when she's back in Chicago. She had no love for Madigan but, she said, she'd still vote for Quinn if she could. He's a "nice guy," she said repeatedly, and noted that he gets a graffiti blaster out in no time whenever the diner is tagged. As she shuttled between tables with plates of pancakes and eggs, Donaldson also told me a story as old as Chicago politics.

Donaldson said she'd gotten a DUI back in the 90s and never completed her community service. Then, about 15 years ago, a vengeful ex-boyfriend reported her to the authorities for it and she was called into court and given a ten-day jail sentence. She thought she'd be able to tough it out, but three days in she said she called a friend and asked them to "'get ahold of Marty Quinn. I don't care what I have to do, just get me out of here!' And he had me out 12 hours later. Time served, out the door."

When I finally met Quinn, 44, he said he had no recollection of Donaldson. He also assured me his staff doesn't put up lawn signs without permission. He pivoted away from the affidavit question and spoke of his suspicions about Krupa. "How does a self-described day-one Donald Trump supporter get 1,700 signatures in the 13th Ward without being disingenuous?"

He isn't afraid of the kid, he said. In fact, he doesn't have "a lot of opinions about him." He's focused on his constituents "and where my vision is," he asserted. Where might that be? To improve local schools and bring new businesses to the ward.

"I do have my own graffiti blaster," he said, explaining he bought it with his aldermanic expense account usually reserved for office supplies. "Yesterday alone we blasted 11 different spots down 63rd Street. I subscribe to the broken window theory, and removing the graffiti is very, very important."

Our interview took place at a long wood table in an empty meeting room on the second floor of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, which is also home to his ward office and the 13th Ward Democratic Organization, chaired by Madigan. The decor of the space sits somewhere on the spectrum between Dracula's castle and Eastern bloc banquet hall. Quinn was wearing gray chinos and a blue gingham Vineyard Vines shirt. As he talked in an even, deliberative tone, he leaned his body forward at a 45-degree angle and rested heavily on his elbows, gesticulating with his hands—but not too much. The posture was at once domineering and nonchalant. He vacillated between an unfocused stare at the back wall and piercing, direct eye contact.

Quinn's father was superintendent of the old 15th Ward, and Marty, the oldest of five, grew up watching his old man handling precinct captain duties too. "Everyone knew him, everyone called him," Quinn recalled. "I can remember my father during snowstorms being out and making sure the streets were cleaned. . . . Election Day was always exciting." The family moved to the 13th Ward when Quinn was nine, but he traces his own genesis as a political operative to Lisa Madigan's 1998 run for state senate. He said he didn't know her father before that, and had been a 22-year-old press-office worker for then-sheriff Michael Sheahan when he signed up to to volunteer for her campaign. "It was an amazing experience," he said.

He'd played baseball in college and felt a "void" after leaving competitive athletics. "Campaigning sort of filled that—the camaraderie and the common goal."

Quinn was careful to underscore that he views his life's work primarily as being a servant of the 13th Ward residents. When asked to describe the community, which is heavily populated by city workers and has shifted from predominantly white to increasingly Latinx in recent years, he used the word "close-knit," adding that "it's a community that looks out for each other. It's a community that works with the police and prides itself on the relationship we have with the police. Yeah—" he stopped abruptly. I asked if there was anything else. "No, I think I covered it."

Quinn said he doesn't see any difference between the needs or priorities of white and Latinx ward residents, but that he'd hired four bilingual employees. He said he keeps spreadsheets tracking every contact with the community, and estimated he's had some 6,000 conversations with residents since 2015. "It's about ten conversations an hour," he added helpfully.

He said his constituents haven't given him any grief about his near-perfect record of voting with the mayor or his handling of the Alaina Hampton sexual harassment scandal. Their main concerns, like his, are education, economic development, and giving the kids stuff to do after school, he said.

After the interview Quinn, with his spokeswoman in tow, led a driving tour around the ward to show off his good works—the public schools he's helped open and sports fields he's helped fund, and a busy stretch of Cicero Avenue where he pointed out new outposts for Taco Bell, Panda Express, Lou Malnati's, McDonald's, and Dunkin' Donuts. "My phone rings off the hook about this corridor, when I couldn't get someone to return a call when I first started eight years ago," he said proudly.

Attempts at friendly conversation were met with reactions from Quinn that made it seem as if he had never heard of conversation before. I noted the proliferation of his yard signs; they seemed to dominate every block in the ward. "Eight hundred and fifty-six total blocks," Quinn noted about the size of his ward, but wouldn't engage further on the topic. I broke an awkward silence by asking what his ten-year-old self would have thought upon seeing his name on nearly every lawn in the ward. The spokeswoman chuckled in the back seat. "I don't know," Quinn said.

I tried a more direct approach: Is it a burden that everyone sees him as an extension of Madigan?

"No, I've never viewed it as a burden," he said, before shifting attention back to the ward. "I've always viewed my public title, the alderman's title, as the community's title. We really bend over backwards with our constituents to help out and be responsive."

If Quinn is having any fun with his campaign, you'd never know. He doesn't cut a remarkable presence. He's neither heavy nor thin, neither particularly good-looking nor especially unattractive. The closest thing he has to a catchphrase is the word "piece," which he uses to refer to everything from buildings to memories to aspects of his job. He drives a spotless gray Buick Regal and listens to sports talk on 670 AM. He's not a ham. If he's got a sense of humor, it's not brought out for reporters to see.

Maybe that's what the 13th Ward likes about its current alderman—a quiet, worker-bee type who'll clean off their graffiti and make sure their kids have good schools and athletic facilities. Or maybe entrenched power just likes to keep a low profile. But there's a chance—slim, if you measure by yard signs alone—that residents will seize their first opportunity to bring in new blood in 27 years, and the face of authority in the 13th Ward will be that of a 19-year-old one-time Trump supporter.

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MAYORAL Q&A

Amara Enyia

IN EARLY DECEMBER, Ben Joravsky interviewed mayoral candidate Amara Enyia. She has a PhD in educational policy and a law degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and at only 35, she's perhaps one of the better-known mayoral candidates in Chicago thanks to her endorsement by Chance the Rapper. This interview has been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

JORAVSKY: Amara, you're younger than most of the other candidates. You've never served in elected office. So address that issue—assure the people of Chicago that garbage will be collected, trains will run, and police will patrol the streets, if Amara Enyia is mayor.

ENYIA: Well, a lot of times the focus is on the number of years of experience, and I always have to remind people that the current circumstances that we're living under, the complaints that people have, the issues and problems that they see, is the result of the current crop of leadership, going back decades. So if you're satisfied with the way things are, then that political experience is what created those conditions. The reality is that far too many Chicagoans are not satisfied.

I've managed nonprofit organizations. I've worked in the business sector, I've worked in the manufacturing sector, I've worked in education, housing, have managed large-scale economic development projects. I'm also an organizer, so you will be hard-pressed to find any candidate who has both the breadth of experience, the understanding across policy areas, but who also is so deeply connected to the everyday lives of Chicagoans. That's the kind of experience that Chicagoans want. They don't want the status quo, they don't want more of the same disconnected individuals who are politicians but have no connection to the experience of everyday Chicagoans.

There's a segment of the city that gets very cautious when it comes to a mayoral election—they fear if a person who comes into office is an outsider, who's not enshrined by corporate Chicago, things will fall apart. I think it's because people have this notion of the mayor as this all-powerful human being. Do you agree with me that this is a prevailing attitude and, if so, what can you do to combat that?

Well, it's about showing that we actually have a shared interest in the city doing well across the board. Right now the city is so polarized and you would be led to believe by the popular narrative that to advance one part of the city means to destroy another part. And that is a false narrative. It's a false dichotomy.

We actually have to show that we cannot be as truly great as a city as we could be unless all parts of the city are doing well. When you're locating in Chicago, you want your employees to work in safe neighborhoods and live in safe neighborhoods. So when you hear about the shootings that are happening downtown, that's sending a message to the large corporations that the city is trying to attract as to whether this is a good investment.

In late November FBI agents invaded the office of 14th Ward alderman Ed Burke, one of the most powerful men on City Council. They raided his office, and five days later Burke had a fund-raiser. About a thousand people showed up, paying $150 to kiss the man's ring. What's your reaction when you see that?

Well, I was not at the fund-raiser [*laughs*]—let's be clear about that. When you have consolidated power for so long, when you have stature that creates this sense of invincibility, that's where corruption is allowed to thrive, that's where backroom deals are allowed to thrive, and that's where you see these kinds of individuals that actually do a disservice to the city.

I'm old enough to remember Ed Burke's role in the 80s Council Wars, how he led the white aldermen against Harold Washington in a Trump-like, nationalist uprising. I cannot forgive him until he at least publicly addresses the role he played. When you go out on the campaign trail, do you hear other old-timers like me talk about these things?

I do. So it's interesting, because I hear the fact that the inflection point for the city of Chicago is 35 years ago. I hear them talking about things like the excitement that they felt to have [in Harold Washington] a mayor that felt like he was of, with, and for the people. Where they felt that they were heard, they felt that he was responsive, that he actually liked the city and enjoyed what it meant to represent people. And the fact that, 35 years later, that is still the reference point, to me speaks so much to what the city has become since that time.

One of the ongoing mistakes of the past that perpetuates things is throwing money at gentrifying neighborhoods with TIF deals, the big one right now being the $800 million Lincoln Yards deal. Are you opposed to that?

I think the Lincoln Yards project is being rushed through—I think the mayor is bypassing a process because perhaps he wants this to be a part of his legacy. I think it's emblematic of the disparity in investment in the city. This project stands to get hundreds of millions of public tax dollars, but again neighborhoods are left behind. So the same neighborhoods that are supposed to benefit from TIF dollars do not get access to those TIF dollars, but these large-scale developers who otherwise would be just fine even without public dollars are getting access to the public dollars. These are just problems that have been long-standing that have not been addressed by the city, and the Lincoln Yards project that's now being rushed through is only the latest example.

In late 2017, Chance the Rapper showed up to oppose a TIF expenditure to build the police academy on the near west side. Despite his pleas, the vote went 47-2 for the police academy. Will you show up, with or without Chance, at the City Council hearing when the aldermen are trying to sneak this Lincoln Yards vote through before Mayor Rahm gets out of office, to say, "no way, don't vote for this"?

I was at the City Council meeting where Chance was standing with organizers who have been talking about this. No Cop Academy is sort of the movement that has formed to talk about why we do so much investment in police infrastructure, but the investment that actually builds strong individuals and communities—it's almost nonexistent.

So I'm presuming you'll show up again to oppose Lincoln Yards?

Of course.

AMARA'S PARTY

ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 19TH, IN THE AFTERMATH OF A NEAR RECORD-SETTING SNOWFALL, I TREKKED ACROSS THE CITY TO ATTEND A "HOUSE PARTY" FOR AMARA ENYIA AT HEIRLOOM BOOKS IN EDGEWATER. A LAWYER AND POLITICAL ANALYST WITH A DOCTORATE DEGREE, ENYIA HAS WON AN ENERGETIC FOLLOWING, DISTINGUISHING HER AMONG A VERY CROWDED FIELD OF MAYORAL CANDIDATES, AND I WAS EAGER TO MEET HER SUPPORTERS. ALL WORDS AND IMAGES ARE FROM THE EVENT.

ANYA DAVIDSON

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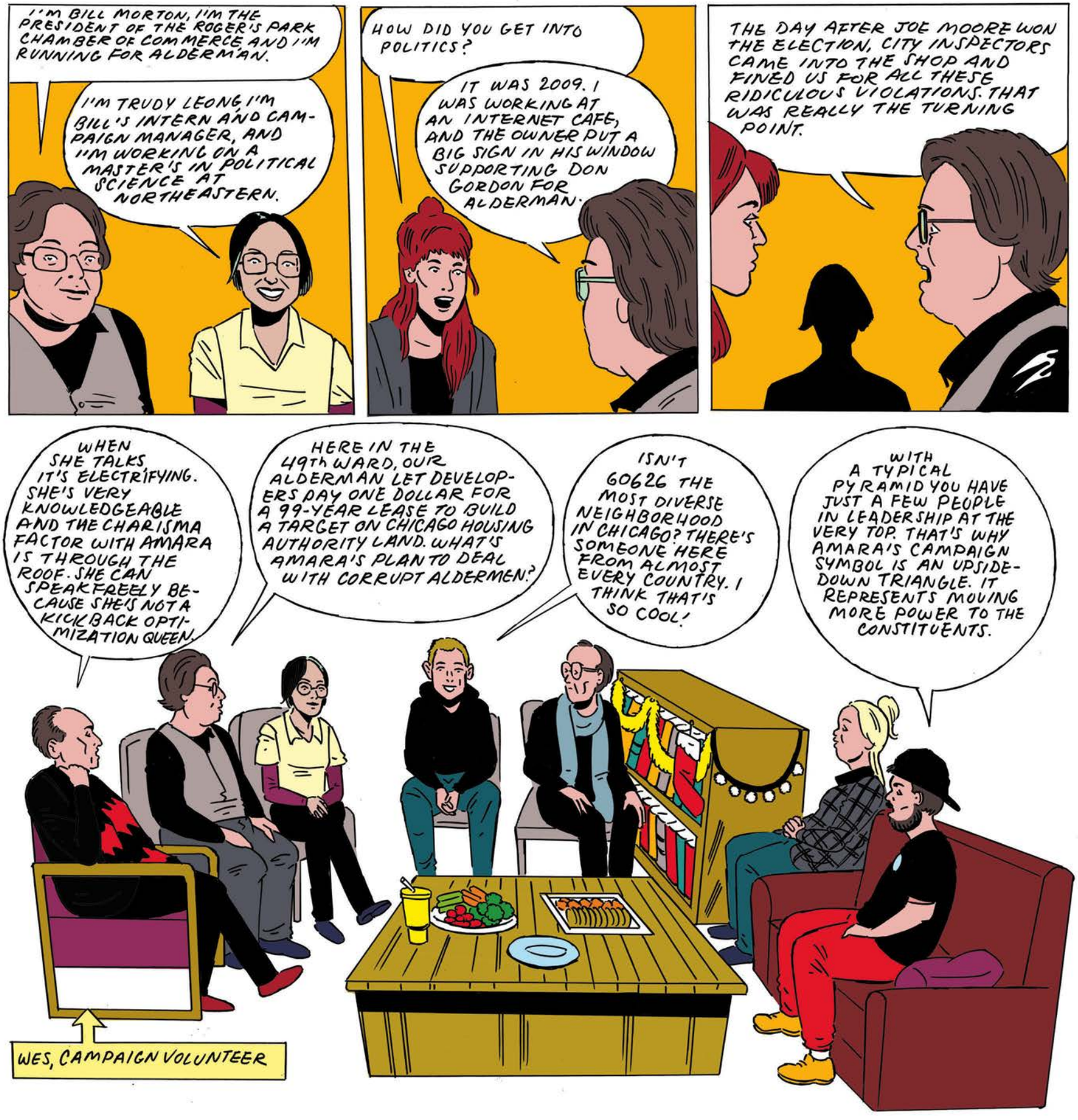

ANYA DAVIDSON

Black exodus

Is Chicago's legacy of segregation causing a reverse Great Migration?

By Pete Saunders

SIMONE MARTIN-NEWBERRY

The Loop and lakefront show all the signs of a city that's booming. Yet Chicago, and more broadly the midwest, is the epicenter of a little-understood reverse Great Migration.

Chicago lost population for the third year in a row, according to the U.S. Census's annual American Community Survey, released last spring. Among the nation's ten largest cities, only four (Los Angeles, Chicago, San Diego, and San Jose) are shedding black residents. Between 2010 and 2017, Chicago did so at four to ten times the rate of the other three. This is unprecedented for any major American city over the last hundred years.

Following the social unrest and suburban growth of the 1960s and '70s, nearly all major American cities witnessed huge population losses. Chicago topped out at 3.6 million residents in 1950, and then went on a slide over the next 40 years to just under 2.8 million in 1990. It ticked upward slightly in 2000 for the first show of growth in half a century but has remained pretty flat ever since.

A policy paper released last year by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) noted some of the usual suspects behind the trend—an aging population, declining birth rates, delayed marriages, and stagnant immigration. Chicago's not gaining large numbers of domestic immigrants like the Sunbelt cities of the south and southwest, or continuing to gain international immigrants like the major coastal cities. That's partly true.

Economists and policy wonks also say Chicago's economy isn't as strong or dynamic as New York's or those of the Bay Area or metropolitan D.C. They also cite Chicago's high taxes as a factor in pushing some residents out. And they'd be partly right. But the fact remains that big coastal cities have taxes that are every bit as high, even higher, than those we have here in Chicago. →

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Neither narrative tells the whole story. The answers may be in the data at the race and ethnicity level. After a big drop in the first half of the last decade, the number of white residents in Chicago has grown 9 percent since 2005. Latino growth has slowed significantly, but it's still up about 5 percent since 2000. Chicago's Asian population has boomed, growing by 44 percent since 2000.

But Chicago's black population, the city's largest demographic in 2000, has dropped by 24 percent through 2017, going from more than one million in 2000 to just under 800,000 in 2017. The number of whites in Chicago surpassed blacks in 2017, and Latinos will almost certainly pass blacks by the time of the 2020 census.

Chicago's population would be increasing if not for the black exodus. How can it be explained?

Well, there's the lack-of-a-dynamic-economy theory and the slowed-immigration theory, already noted. And there's the rust-belt-restructuring theory, which suggests that Chicago's transition from a manufacturing-dominant economy to a service- or tech-based one creates new winners and losers—and that we're shedding those who are unable to contribute in the new economic environment. Also partly true, but pretty Darwinistic.

There's also the "crime and schools" theory. Chicago's violent crime rate has been a national story for some years now, and while crime is down significantly from the "crack era" 90s, it hasn't fallen as much as it has in other major cities. The closure of more than 50 schools in 2013, mostly in black communities on the south and west sides, meant the loss of key local anchor institutions. Without a doubt there are many blacks who feel they are being pushed out of Chicago by its crime challenges, and that the school closures were an indication of a lack of investment in critical local institutions.

Chicago demographer and public policy consultant Rob Paral said as much in an interview with real estate news website bisnow.com last spring. Discussing the city's population loss, he said, "Blacks are concerned about policy issues like school closures, crime, and policing. What we're seeing is a reverse migration to southern areas of the country."

That's right—black Chicagoans aren't flocking to the suburbs so much as leaving the region altogether. The number of blacks in the metro area but outside of Chicago has been relatively stagnant since 2000, an indication that people are leaving. The cities gaining at Chicago's expense? Sunbelt hot spots like Atlanta, Dallas, and Houston. The draw is the perception of greater opportunity, and perhaps the chance to restore old southern networks with family and friends who stuck around.

That's why I come down to Chicago's legacy of segregation as the biggest driver of this pattern.

Segregation has created a lack of economic mobility. I'd argue that Chicago is economically stratified to the extent that upward mobility for blacks here is particularly difficult. The CMAP report noted that the unemployment rate for blacks in Chicagoland stubbornly stays at more than twice the region's rate, and that more than 60 percent of blacks who left the region were without a local job when they did so. Networks are hard to penetrate. The power structure is rigid. There's also a lack of residential mobility. Chicago and its suburbs are more open to people of color than ever before, but blacks here are acutely aware that people still attach stigmas to places we move to. This has the impact of stagnating or lowering property values and rents where blacks move in large numbers, often wiping whole chunks of the region from the minds of many. The south side and south and southwest burbs don't even occur to many whites seeking affordable options.

The "crime and schools" theory is related to an even broader concept—displacement by decline. A lack of investment in parts of the city leads to institutional destabilization, and ultimately abandonment. When the time is right—values are at their lowest, or the social stigma is lost—revitalization can take place under a new regime. Some black Chicagoans point to the transformation of the South Loop and near south side, which lost nearly half of their (mostly black) residents between 1950 and 1990, but have since tripled in population via a high-rise condo-tower boom. The South Loop and near south side are more diverse than ever, as whites, Latinos, Asians, and others inhabit areas previously unexplored. This is why the discussion of black population loss in Chicago ends with bafflement and befuddlement—and makes "displacement by decline" the de facto policy.

The hallmark of Chicago (and rust-belt) segregation has been black avoidance. Since the Great Migration the practice has been to explicitly or implicitly contain blacks within certain areas. But as metro areas got bigger, transportation more of a challenge, and city living more desirable, new attention was given to long-forgotten places. Here in Chicago that started with former white ethnic areas (Lincoln Park, Wicker Park, etc). Within the last ten to 20 years that expanded to include largely Latino areas (Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Pilsen). But for the most part the pattern of black avoidance remains.

In places with stronger economies, like New York and Washington, D.C., there's been more direct engagement—even conflict—between white newcomers and longtime black residents in many communities. Spike Lee famously ranted about gentrification arriving in black neighborhoods in Brooklyn five years ago, and the area surrounding D.C.'s historically black Howard University has witnessed significant change in the last decade. But the rust-belt pattern is one of indirect conflict. Places collapse, then new groups come in.

Strangely, Detroit might be one of the best examples of "displacement by decline" in action. The Motor City has been at the absolute forefront of urban stigmatization. But Detroit is now in the midst of a major transformation precisely in the areas that were once abandoned and left for ruin. Downtown Detroit has been transformed; surrounding neighborhoods are undergoing a renaissance. What was once the disgraced Cass Corridor is now upscale and hip Midtown.

For both Detroit and Chicago it appears the near future will bring the continued loss of black residents and continued gains in whites, Latinos, and Asians. Both cities, and others like them in the rust belt, will become more diverse and, at the same time, less black. Population loss will become population gain again.

By the middle of this century we could be talking about the incredible transformation of former rust-belt cities. But the blacks who contributed mightily to their growth in the 20th century might not be able to share in the new prosperity. Which leads to the question: Are blacks moving to new spaces with greater opportunity, or moving away from their next best shot at it?

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Stuffed cabbage
MELISSA BLACKMON

FOOD FEATURE

Diaspora Dinners explores a world of Jewish food from a tiny kitchen

The pop-up series traverses Europe through the Middle East to the American south and beyond.

By MIKE SULA

Once a month Dylan Maysick cooks Shabbat dinner for 90. This Sunday he'll be teaching a Montreal bagel class in an Albany Park shared kitchen. Last Friday he hosted a dinner party for ten featuring, in part, blintzes, stuffed cabbage rolls, and poppy-seed challah—a menu inspired by the pioneering *Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook* (1938) by Fania Lewanda, who ran a kosher vegetarian restaurant and cooking school in Lithuania before she was murdered in the Holocaust.

Eggplant salad
MELISSA BLACKMON

Maysick is the grandson of two Swedish-American Christian pastors from Grand Rapids. His grandmother was born at Swedish Covenant Hospital, in North Park, and for college he moved to the neighborhood to attend North Park University (founded and guided by the Evangelical Covenant Church). Now he lives in neighboring Albany Park, originally settled by Swedish immigrants, who were eventually succeeded by Russian Jews.

Maysick isn't Jewish, but for the past year or so he's hosted meals and taught cooking classes under the rubric Diaspora Dinners. It's a pop-up series focused on the foods of the Jewish diaspora—and sometimes creative interpretations of them. He's served Sichuan peppercorn brisket for Jewish Christmas; fried chicken with pastrami baked beans and challah Texas toast for a celebration of southern American Jewish food; and eggplant schnitzel with za'atar, pickled mango, and tahini for a series of vegan Middle Eastern dinners.

"We would have never ever gotten there without the rules," he says of the last dish, an animal-free nod to the ever-present veal schnitzels he encountered on a trip to Israel the previous year. "Trying to work around restrictions is the birth of creativity." The kosher dietary restrictions are partially what appeals to him about the global adaptability of Jewish food. And yet, "I didn't grow up eating much ethnic food."

Maysick's first exercise working within a strict culinary framework was making vegan and gluten-free doughnuts he sold at a Brooklyn farmers' market after a stint as a public school teacher. In 2015 he returned to Chicago to reunite with his girlfriend (now his wife) and launched a wholesale doughnut business, eventually headquartering at Bridgeport Coffee's Beverly outpost. If you track his Instagram over the years, blueberry-pomegranate and potato chip-chocolate glazed give way to black-and-white cookies and za'atar-dusted pretzels. By fall 2017 he was burnt out on making doughnuts for people he'd never meet and he hung it up, taking a work-at-home job with his brother-in-law's insurance brokerage.

Maysick's wife, Rachel Ellison, is an artist who creates elaborate ritual Judaica such as ketubah, the Jewish marriage contract, and gematria, Kabbalistic interpretations of proper names or words. Maysick, who considers himself an agnostic, says that in the year leading up to their marriage, "I felt some pressures to convert. There's just an expectation that one person converts. But it just felt like it would cheapen the whole thing to convert as wedding prep."

But he did come to see food as a secular gateway to understanding the Jewish culture he'd embraced. In November 2017, inspired by Ellison's family tradition of Chinese and a movie on Christmas, he applied for funding from One Table, a not-for-profit organization that provides support for young adults to host Shabbat dinners. He teamed up with his friend Chris Reed, who runs the Indonesian-Cajun catering company the Rice Table, and together they planned their first Jewish Christmas dinner, held after hours at Steingold's and featuring scallion-pancake challah (the recipe is from suburban Glenview native and ➔

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Dylan Maysick and Chris Reed prep for a Diaspora Dinners pop-up. MELISSA BLACKMON

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cookbook author Molly Yeh), orange chicken with tahini noodles, and hot-and-sour matzo ball soup.

A few months later they followed up with the Jewish South, informed in part by Marcie Cohen Ferris's *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South*, which details how southern Jews adapted to a cuisine heavy on trayf like pork and shellfish. Along with the chicken and beans, he made sweet potato challah and matzo ball soup with brisket broth and Cajun spices. Vegan Middle Eastern dinners followed, along with cooking classes and occasional pickup pastry boxes featuring black-and-white cookies, pomegranate-glazed challah rolls, and fig-cardamom rugelach.

It's a team effort. Ellison often designs and prints accompanying cookbooks featuring the recipes, and says the kiddush and the motzi, the blessing over the bread and "wine" (at the southern dinners it was bourbon and Coke, at the vegan dinners Manischewitz spritzers). Reed contributes restraint. "He has a sense of what is a reasonable amount of creativity and then what gets into a Fierian space," says Maysick. "Sometimes we're trying to create something that once was, and sometimes it's the ingredients we're excited about."

Maysick offers something or other about once a month, though Ellison is expected to give birth to their daughter in early March and he's planning to take a month or so off for a paternity break. Meantime, he's plotting a Syrian-Jewish dinner for late April or May, which he'll announce on his Instagram.

"I'm not hesitant to, in the most respectful way, try to cook food that's not my narrative," he says. "I'm trying to construct meaning for myself and explore my understanding of Jewish culture and Jewishness through all these other things around it. It feels like I have skin in the game. I never converted, but this is a Jewish home. We're going to raise Jewish kids. I'm looking to the past to understand what Jewishness is. How does that work if I don't even know if I really believe in God? I grapple with all these things, and food is a way to do that."

Kolacky with raspberry jam MELISSA BLACKMON

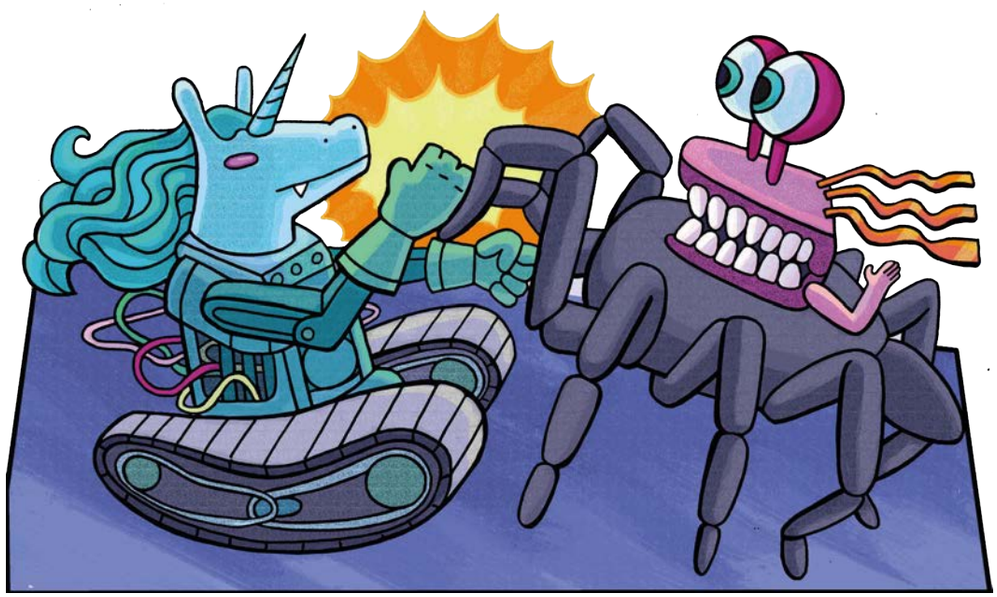
@MikeSula

ENTERTAINMENT

Robot Riot!

It's back, with more beer, doughnuts, and mayhem.

By Luca Cimarusti



CORINNE MUCHA

This past Sunday night was the first really frigid night of the year, a night with the kind of weather that left the streets barren and delayed flights at O'Hare. But folks of all sorts, many even in costume—including a guy in a full-on purple-velvet Mad Hatter suit and top hat—crammed into Emporium Arcade Bar in Wicker Park to witness the return of Robot Riot, an event that its organizers describe as "the backyard wrestling of robot fighting."

The rules are pretty simple: robot builders bring in their homemade creations, remote-controlled battle bots that are small enough to duke it out on a tabletop. The robots engage in one-on-one fisticuffs, a sort of "robot sumo" where the object is to knock an opponent off the table or render it immobile. If the one-minute round doesn't produce a clear winner, one is chosen by the volume of the crowd's cheers, though with the shocking amounts of beer being consumed by everyone in the room, it was hard to keep track of who the cheers were for.

It was the first Robot Riot in Chicago in about a year, so excitement was especially high. The event's organizers, Adrian Choy and Joe Piro, had spent the bulk of 2018 traveling with the Museum of Science and Industry's hands-on Robot Revolution exhibit, spreading their robotic obsessions with kids all over the country. Now the two are stationed in Chicago again and ready to make Robot Riot a regular occurrence. This weekend was the sixth since 2015, and judging from the packed, rowdy room, it's an understatement to say that it's grown from its humble beginnings.

Choy hosted that first battle at the now-closed Geek Bar in Wicker Park. He built six of the eight robots that went at it that night, handing them out to random people in the small 20-person crowd. He describes the genesis of Robot Riot as a way to combine his love of creative technology with his interest in Chicago's "weird underground-events scene," citing the Windy City Rollers and the Chicago Lady League of Arm Wrestlers as inspirations. Choy also says that he started Robot Riot because he "needed something cathartic to deal with the baggage in my life." It doesn't get much more cathartic than crushing beers and watching miniature robots smash the snot out of each other.

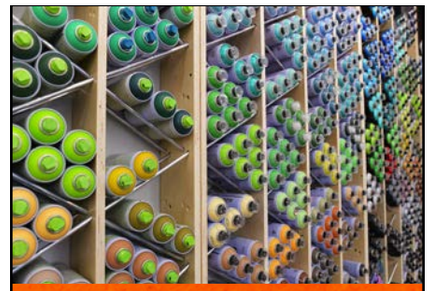
There was a lot of ingenuity on display on the battle table at Emporium. Robots used wedges, nets, hammers, and glitter cannons to incapacitate their foes. But no fighter used advanced technology quite like Cheat Day, a tower-shaped bot topped with a doughnut. Cheat Day's movements weren't steered by a remote control like his competitors, but by wires attached to a pint of beer and a doughnut held by its creator. When the snacks reached the operator's mouth, Cheat Day would move.

The problem was that all the beer in the pint was gone before the round's 60 seconds were up, leaving Cheat Day unable to properly function and vulnerable to a beating from its opponent. Clearly not a winning strategy, but based on the uproarious crowd reaction, Cheat Day was the night's clear fan favorite. It's too bad it didn't take the championship though, considering one of the grand prizes was a $30 gift card to Stan's Donuts. That honor went to Nature Bot, built by Carlos Garcia and piloted by Ken "Filipino Flair" Seli, a team-up that Choy describes as "a force of nature."

Now that Choy, Piro, and Robot Riot are back in Chicago, they're looking to move things to another level. "I like the dirty-basement punk rock aesthetic we got going on, but I want to see how big and loud we can make this show," says Choy. "I want to get the complete Wrestlemania vibe at some point—smoke machines, lasers, intro music, the works."

For as rowdy and over-the-top as the energy of Robot Riot is, Choy sees it as an educational community event. "I want to make sure that we create an inclusive environment and continue to draw in amateurs who want to build robots but never have before," he says. "I want everyone in the crowd to think, 'I can do this too.' Most of our competitors don't have any experience coding or soldering circuits, but we do what we can to hook up would-be fighters with resources so that they can turn their drunken bar-napkin doodles into combat robots."

@LucaCimarusti



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LIT

Am I Man Enough?

Ada Cheng's live-lit performance series wants to know.

By Brianna Wellen

Cheng (third from right) and fellow storytellers at Volumes Bookcafe ANTWAN MCHENRY BELMER

Am I Man Enough?
Wed 1/30, 7 PM, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark, 773-769-9299, renegadeadacheng.com. FREE

In November 2017, shortly after the start of the #MeToo movement, Ada Cheng took over the storytelling show Pour One Out at Volumes Bookcafe in Wicker Park. Cheng was a tenured professor of sociology at DePaul University for 15 years until January 2016, when she resigned in order to pursue a career in theater and performance with a focus on telling stories related to gender and race. When she started producing Pour One Out, she was exploring how to critically analyze gender roles outside of academia. The theme of the first show she produced was "toxic masculinity." The room that night was packed, and Cheng was overwhelmed by the support. Participants had a palpable need to share their stories, listen to others, and learn more about how and why the culture got here. Cheng soon realized there was more than enough interest and material to base an entire ongoing series around that theme.

Am I Man Enough? is a live-lit show that asks storytellers to critically examine the effects of toxic masculinity through personal narratives. Cheng hosts the shows at different venues across the city to reach as many audiences as possible. The next performance is on January 30 at Women & Children First; on April 25 she'll be collaborating with Center on Halsted for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. When putting lineups together, Cheng avoids giving performers a specific prompt and instead offers guidelines for how to approach whatever material they have chosen to share. "While storytelling can be entertaining, it doesn't have to be for entertainment," Cheng says. "The only thing I ask is that tellers are honest, vulnerable, critical, and reflective. Tell a story that serves you. Tell the story in a way that serves the nature of the story. You don't need to cater your story to entertain audiences."

Cheng tries to make it very clear to her audiences what they're getting into. She describes the series as a critical look at "the culture of toxic masculinity and the construction of masculinity and manhood." That's likely the reason, she says, that she hasn't seen much pushback—if you disagree with the idea that masculinity can be harmful, you're likely not going to show up to a reading series in a feminist bookstore. What she does worry about is how those who are present might be triggered by some of the stories. Exploring male toxicity inherently brings up stories of sexual assault, rape, physical abuse, and other distressing experiences. "Telling traumatic stories is part of healing," Cheng says, "but I also know storytelling can injure you again." She is exploring ways she can provide support for storytellers and audience members as the series continues, like having counselors on hand at events.

Despite the proliferation of spaces exclusively for female-identifying and nonbinary performers in recent years, Cheng doesn't shy away from inviting men onto the show. An important part of dismantling the dangers of the culture surrounding toxic masculinity is involving everyone in the conversation, and Cheng encourages men to reflect on their own experiences. How did toxic masculinity affect how they were raised? What actions did they take to try to fit a societal mold? How have they been complicit in perpetuating toxic behavior?

Cheng considers not only all genders, but all levels of performance experience for each lineup. "Oftentimes at storytelling shows you get the same people over and over again," Cheng says. "I want to hear people with good stories to tell even if they aren't good storytellers, because those are two completely different things. I have tellers who have never told before, and it really doesn't matter to me."

It's important to Cheng to continue the conversation inspired by Am I Man Enough? Just as important is thoughtfully planning each show and giving storytellers plenty of time to prepare. While all of the performances so far have been on the north side, Cheng is now being more diligent about bringing the show to different neighborhoods across the city. One thing is for certain: there's no shortage of stories to tell.

"I think people, especially in this past year with our collective reckoning of toxic masculinity, we're at a point where everyone is wrestling with this issue," Cheng says. "A lot of people want to tell their stories. I have a tough time accommodating everyone. I wish I could capture all of them."

@BriannaWellen

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This program is generously funded by the Joyce Foundation.

Our Perspective: Asian American Play Readings
Mon 1/28, 6:30 PM, Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln, 773-972-6745, our-perspective.com, $8.

Urora Adachi-Winter, Matthew C. Yee, and Richard Costes from 2018 Our Perspective readings MATTHEW HOLLIS

THEATER

Cracking the ceiling

Our Perspective gives Asian Pacific American playwrights a chance to tell their stories.

By Catey Sullivan

You don't have to do more than cursory research to see that playwrights of Asian descent aren't particularly well represented in Chicago theaters. "I know stages are getting more diverse. But I don't think we can rest on our laurels," says actor Mia Park, a regular on *Chicago Med* and one of the curators of Our Perspective: Asian American Play Readings, a series of staged readings of four short plays by Asian Pacific American (APA) playwrights, all hailing from the midwest.

The showcase at Victory Gardens Theater marks the start of the second year for Our Perspective, produced by the AA Arts Incubator Program of Asian Improv Arts Midwest (AIRMW). Steppenwolf 1700 hosted last fall's Our Perspective; additional Our Perspective readings are planned for May 20 at Steppenwolf and in September, date and venue TBD. (If you want to submit for the May 20 readings, the deadline is Friday, February 15.) The January plays were picked from about 30 submissions and curated by Park and collaborators Stephen George, Sydney Mercado, Karissa Murrell Myers, and Friday Savathphoune.

Iowan Zhen E Rammelsberg made the cut with her submission, *Black Box*. Adopted from South Korea in 1974 when she was two, Rammelsberg penned a quasi-autobiographical drama about a South Korean adoptee growing up in a tiny, all-white midwestern town. "I was the only nonwhite person in an all-white community, population about 700," Rammelsberg says of her upbringing in Van Horne, Iowa. "It wasn't like I was in the only Asian family. I was the only Asian person, period."

"People would always ask my mother whether she was going to tell me I was adopted," Rammelsberg says. "My mother was smart and funny—she'd say something like 'I think she'll figure that out on her own.' I learned to use humor as deflection early. I was adopted at a time when you assimilated. You forgot you were from another culture. Parents didn't cultivate that other culture."

Rammelsberg gave her character a narrative that blends South Korean culture with elements of fantasy. "You know how Snoopy in the *Peanuts* cartoons was always typing that same sentence as the start of his novel, 'It was a dark and stormy night'? Well, my dark and stormy night is this: 'In a corner of the world stood a black box, and in the black box was . . . '" She trails off and then continues, "I've had that sentence in my mind since I was a child. I was never able to finish it. Until this play."

Park directs Chicago playwright Preston Choi's *Yankee Princess*, a 1960s-set story about two North Korean teenagers coming of age in the midwest in the wake of the Korean war. "It spoke to me," Park says. "My mom's entire family escaped from [North] Korea. Some escaped in the bottom of a rice boat. Some walked chest high in the ocean, carrying their babies strapped to their backs. So yes, I have this direct emotional and spiritual connection to this story and to the identity struggles it gets into."

The other two plays in the series are both by Chicagoans: *Following* is a comedy about stalking and social media by Art Institute of Chicago librarian and Apollo Chorus singer Alvin Dantes. *Games*, which follows the travails of a Korean-American teen determined to break into improv, is by Chicago Dramatists resident playwright Susan H. Pak.

The overarching goal of Our Perspective is to steer the plays toward full productions. That hasn't happened yet, but Park is undaunted. What she calls an "unseen glass ceiling" between APA theater artists and the stage is slowly cracking, she says. "People in charge might not know that they've built or are holding up that glass ceiling. All we can do is present opportunities and allow every institution to smash their own ceilings to elevate everyone. Or at least crack the ceiling."

@CateySullivan

Come Hell or High Water
Through 2/2: Sat 5:30 PM,
Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood,
773-761-4477, lifelinetheatre.com, $10.

THEATER

Through the looking glass

Come Hell or High Water, Tekki Lomnicki, and Tellin' Tales Theatre could change the conversation about how we perceive disabilities.

By Max Maller

Tekki Lomnicki is a brilliant solo performer and the creator of Tellin' Tales Theater, which has produced and fostered creative work by people with disabilities for more than 20 years. Lomnicki has a disability that affects her height: she is a little person. She walks with a set of crutches and does her storytelling act mostly from a folding chair. When she's seated, she stands the crutches up against the chair's frame; when it's time to get up, she picks them up again.

Lomnicki, who is joined here by three fellow storytellers for Tellin' Tales' contribution to the Fillet of Solo Festival at Lifeline Theatre, doesn't ignore the subject of her disability. She wants the world to appear to you, even if it's only for the hour run time of the show, the way it appears to her and other individuals with physical challenges. She wants to alter the conversation.

The world as experienced by someone like Lomnicki—or by Di Reed, who suffers from macular degeneration, or by Linda Bannon, who was born without arms—in each case is fundamentally different and distinct from the world as encountered by others on a daily basis. What appears to an able-bodied person as an obstacle may be an assistive device; what appears normal to others may prove an obstacle to these storytellers. Lomnicki tells a great story about the kind of gymnastics it took to get milk out of the refrigerator in her parents' "1950's John Birch bi-level home." Lomnicki's father was obsessed with modern furniture and could not abide the presence of footstools, handrails, or accessible cabinets in his exquisite Formica kitchen. He went in for that classic of midcentury design, a petal-pink wall refrigerator, which hung above the countertops by a bracket and presented, in the words of its slogan, "All foods at your eye level."

But the contents were not at eye level for Lomnicki. When she wanted a glass of milk as a kid, she would have to climb onto the laminated counter, grab the milk carton with one hand while balancing herself against the sink with the other, and then slide her way down to the floor without spilling. What her dad had installed as a progressive item of convenience became a hostile menace for his daughter, one of many in a house and a childhood that seemed carefully customized for everyone except her.

Lomnicki recalls reading *Alice in Wonderland* around this time and envying Alice her cake that made her grow tall. She wished there could have been a little bite of cake so she wouldn't have to climb on any more counters or sit on phone books while she was learning to drive. But there's more to the comparison. When Alice is tall, she lives in a tall person's world. While Lomnicki is talking, we see the world the way she used to see it, a place full of inconveniences but also opportunities—like how the ramp that was installed in the stairwell, finally, to elevate her up to her bedroom made so much noise that it could drown out boys' footsteps as they tiptoed up the stairs. There are new logistics for Alice to consider once she eats that piece of cake and her head hits the ceiling; it would be a good idea next Christmas, Alice says, to mail her feet new boots. Lomnicki's story, like Alice's, defamiliarizes the world we think we know, exposing our perception of it as merely one possible perception, our eye level as one eye level and not "eye level."

The show is full of similar opportunities for an epistemological wake-up call. I will never be able to get the phrase "stroller mommies" out of my head when I ride the CTA now that I've heard Michael Herzovi (who will be replaced by Israel Antonio for the January 26 performance) describe this species of commuter as the bane of his transit existence. Herzovi, who has congenitally shortened limbs and uses a wheelchair, is especially good at making his audience see the reality he has to navigate while, in his words, "being different in an indifferent world." One of the most powerful moments in the show is when Bannon describes learning how to walk the balance beam in gym class. That is the feeling with this Tellin' Tales show overall: a sense of courage against stiff odds, a willingness to not only overcome the ego blow of the difficulty but the difficulty itself, and then share that journey with strangers.

Tekki Lomnicki COURTESY LIFELINE THEATRE

@mallerjour

Dada Woof Papa Hot MICHAEL BROSILOW

THEATER

Fact and fiction

Big Science performs investigations into the human condition.

The meandering series of bits, skits, monologues, and pantomimes that makes up Hot Kitchen Collective's exploration of outer and inner space doesn't necessarily have a narrative, but it has no shortage of things to say. Nine performers take turns riffing on science facts and fiction while wearing very homemade, provisional astronaut garb. I spent most of its 75-minute running time with a smile on my face.

References to shopworn pop culture signifiers like the musical theme from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (used repeatedly as an interstitial, to varying comic effect) are counterbalanced by moments of poetic, often wordless wonder. A silent procession of astronauts holding glass beakers filled with blue liquid lit from within by little LED lights is truly magical. But a minute later, a girl is spouting made-up facts about narwhals.

Big Science very much takes a young person's perspective on the state of the world in the ease with which it jumps from the silly to the serious, but taking science as a jumping-off point to explore the human condition is a gutsy and ambitious move. The vacuum-sealed snacks suspended at various points around the theater lend the piece an eerie, dystopian feel. In one memorable bit, a sweaty girl caps an energetic dance routine by reaching up and grabbing a bagged can of Pepsi. She pops the top through the plastic, tips it toward her mouth, then watches along with the rest of us as the bubbling brown fluid fills the bag but never reaches her mouth. It's one odd but compelling sight in a show overflowing with them. **—Dmitry Samarov** ***Big Science*** *Through 2/7: Thu 8 PM, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650, hotkitchencollective.com, $20, $15 industry.*

A romantic idyll ended by violence

***Cardboard Piano* looks for hope and healing in Uganda.**

Within its first 30 minutes, Hansol Jung's riveting drama hurtles from bliss to slaughter. We're in Uganda, watching two 16-year-old girls celebrate their love with a giddily joyful "wedding" ceremony. Chris (Kearstyn Keller) is the white daughter of missionaries. Adiel (Adia Alli) is a black Ugandan. Their fears are telling: Chris frets her soul will go to hell. Adiel has more immediate concerns. Being a gay Ugandan, she points out to Chris, is punishable by life in prison. Before the couple's sweet, celebratory wedding dance is over, it's clear that prison isn't the worst thing Ugandan gays have to fear. Their idyll is interrupted by violence, their romance ended by gunfire.

Directed by Mechelle Moe, *Cardboard Piano* succeeds on multiple fronts. It's a riveting story. It's a scathing take on religious hypocrisy. It is a harrowing glimpse into the life of Uganda's child soldiers. It is a deft exploration of the inextricable connections between personal beliefs and sociopolitical systems. With each pivot in the intricate plot, Jung reveals a new perspective on both the individual characters and the lethal, institutionalized bigotry overpowering them.

The cast (which also includes Freedom Martin as Pika, a child soldier, and Kai A. Ealy as Paul, a Ugandan preacher) captures huge emotions without a featherweight of artifice. Among the high points: Pika's monologue about how he's learned to survive atrocities by perpetuating them. The passage seems to suck the oxygen from the room, leaving the audience to choke on the moral complexities of a stolen life.

TimeLine's fathoms-deep dramaturgy (leave time to peruse Jared Bellot's lobby displays) underlines the historical fact that in Uganda, the rise of homophobia and the incursion of Christian missionaries are inarguably connected. Jung offers a sliver of hope amid the brutal damage left in their wake. There's beauty in the ethereal, haunting hymn that closes *Cardboard Piano*, and perhaps the distant prospect of healing. **—Catey Sullivan** ***Cardboard Piano*** *Through 3/17: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Tue 3/12, 7:30 PM; performance Wed 3/6, 8 PM, no performance Fri 3/15, TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington, 773-281-8463, timelinetheatre.com, $40-$54, $26-$35 students, $25 U.S. military personnel, veterans, first responders and their families.*

A remembrance of things past

In *Charlie Johnson Reads All of Proust*, a small-town Hoosier goes in search of lost time.

Chicago playwright Amy Crider creates a tidy Proustian universe in this evening-length monologue, delivered by a 75-year-old small-town Hoosier named Charlie Johnson. He appears before us because he once dipped a madeleine in his coffee, whereupon his uppity daughter-in-law Patricia, witnessing this seemingly inconsequential act, promptly offered a condescending minilecture on *Remembrance of Things Past*. Determined to prove he's no rube (or at least less of one than Patricia suspects), he sets out to read all seven volumes, but in short order gets sucked into his own search for lost time when the taste of cornmeal mush (his madeleine, as it were) evokes consequential memories of his rural Indiana boyhood.

Johnson imagines himself an anti-Proust, devoted to plain talk, hard work, and "doing right." While performer Jeff Broitman is largely wrong for the part—he's more nebbishy east-coast intellectual than salt-of-the-earth midwesterner, and he looks three decades shy of 75—his grounded deliberation keeps the script's complex narrative in sharp focus. Although at times he proceeds at such a cautious pace the show feels more like a recitation than a conversation, he finds disarming vulnerability in the play's emotional climax, as Johnson realizes his life turned out happy primarily because his wife suffered a horrible trauma.

Crider overshoots her landing, wandering for ten minutes or so after the satisfying conclusion of Johnson's sobering revelation. But the nourishment in her stream-of-consciousness storytelling makes me want to tackle Proust all over again—something I never thought I'd say. **—Justin Hayford** ***Charlie Johnson Reads All of Proust*** *Through 1/27: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-697-3830, thedentheatre.com, $20, $10 industry and students.*

'Isn't being normal the most radical thing of all?'

***Dada Woof Papa Hot* shows that modern parenthood's not just for straight people.**

It's never been lost on the gay community that the entire blueprint for modern child rearing and tin-through-golden-years marriage is based upon the written and unwritten laws of straight people.

But only in the past decade have LGBTQ folks gotten the opportunity to put, on a wide scale, different

➡ philosophies and theories about partnerships and raising a family into practice within mainstream culture. "Isn't being normal the most radical thing of all?" asks a father played by Jos N. Banks in Peter Parnell's exceptionally relevant and astute relationship drama. (For the record, God no).

Keira Fromm's nuanced and universally well-cast About Face production tracks a handful of well-to-do New York couples, gay and straight, through the thornier challenges of staying true to themselves while, as one of the characters puts it, "playing the role of parents." It's the sort of one-act show that feels like the culmination of a prestige television season: challenging and populated by richly defined characters who make arguable decisions sure to strike a multitude of different chords with different audiences.

While Parnell's story deals exclusively with the sort of monied couples that can quibble over risotto, elite private schools, and carefully negotiated extramarital trysts, the action in Fromm's production is always informed by questions and complications regarding class and race and social systems. It's hands down one of the most interesting examinations of contemporary gay life I've seen in recent memory, and the discomfiting tactic used here of holding up a mirror to its audience without cynicism or sweetening is on par with Stephen Sondheim. **—Dan Jakes** ***Dada Woof Papa Hot*** *Through 2/16: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, aboutfacetheatre.com, $38, $20 students and seniors.*

RR There will be blood

Especially if you sit in the splatter zone at *Evil Dead: The Musical*.

Attention S-Mart shoppers! Grab your Boomstick and journey to a cabin in the woods with a group of college kids who are in for a hell of a time in this enjoyable musical comedy homage.

Few film franchises have spawned such a rabid cult following as Sam Raimi's eminently quotable classic B-movie horror film *Evil Dead* and its subsequent sequels. Black Button Eyes' production has everything an uberfan could expect, including inside jokes, over-the-top gore, campy dialogue taken straight from the films, 1980s political incorrectness, and a well-defined splatter zone. There will be blood. Lots of it. The special effects are nothing short of beautiful.

Jordan Dell Harris, a star in the making, perfectly re-creates Bruce Campbell's iconic performance as Ash with myriad facial expressions, wonderfully dynamic physicality, and wry catchphrases. Caitlin Jackson is a pleasure to watch as Cheryl; she spends most of the performance possessed, eyes glowing, dropping bad puns onto the stage like body parts. Shane Roberie plays good old reliable Jake, whose hilarious solo is a highlight.

The script by George Reinblatt balances catchy musical numbers with hysterical dialogue, well supported by Oliver Townsend's musical direction. The excellent cast makes use of every inch of the intimate stage, in no small part thanks to Derek Van Barham's tight choreography, which adds whimsy and enhances the cheesy nature of the show. The actors are clearly having a great time and, much like the Kandarian Demons in the story, their joy possesses the audience. **—Josh Flanders** ***Evil Dead: The Musical*** *Through 2/16: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Tue 1/29, 7:30 PM, Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, 773-270-3654, blackbuttoneyes.com, $30.*

RR Sisterhood is powerful

And *Little Women the Musical* is an absolute delight.

Most top-ten lists of queer feminist authors don't mention Louisa May Alcott, and *Little Women* is better remembered as a quaint account of feminine domesticity than the subtle revolution that it is: the story of sisters in a wartime household headed by their mother that includes but does not focus on their relationships with men. At the center of the narrative is Jo—an impassioned author of hilariously melodramatic thrillers who won't bow to fashion or tradition as she drives and then chronicles the escapades of the March girls. Lest this make *Little Women the Musical*, with music by Jason Howland, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and book by Allan Knee, sound like a didactic snore, rest assured: it is an absolute delight. In Brown Paper Box Co.'s wonderful production, directed by Stephanie Rohr and M. William Panek, romantic Meg, headstrong Jo, sweet Beth, and vain Amy come to life with beautiful, believable intimacy on Strawdog's storefront stage.

The Brown Paper Box cast is a dream. Not only can they sing, they portray the affection, joys, frustrations, and hopes of these women with authenticity and rapport. Tessa Dettman is a charismatic Jo with a powerhouse set of pipes, and Kim Green's pouting Amy has the nuance to make the ambitions of the youngest and most overlooked of the sisters understood. Will Kazda is ditzy and fun as their neighbor Laurie. And among the most distinct pleasures of this production is hearing every voice unamplified, accompanied only by a single piano (played by Justin Harner). **—Irene Hsiao** ***Little Women the Musical*** *Through 2/9: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3:30 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3:30 PM; no performance Thu 1/24, Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice, brownpaperbox.org, $25.*

Slapstick economics

***Noises Off* proves that too-frequent gags have diminishing marginal returns.**

Frothy and insubstantial, Michael Frayne's *Noises Off* is a cute and silly romp through the run of a terribly doomed fictional performance. Hard-nosed director Lloyd Dallas (portrayed with dry wit by Mike Tepeli) leads this play within a play and tries his best to whip his daft and melodramatic cast into shape—all to no avail. Lines are forgotten, love triangles grow complicated, sardines get tossed, and the wheels rapidly fall off this rickety contraption.

As act two begins, the audience is invited to get up from their seats and walk around to take in the glorious disaster from backstage. The behind-the-scenes view has a live-action Looney Tunes spirit and showcases director Scott Weinstein's flair for slapstick comedy. His cast may be one of the hardest working onstage in Chicago right now: just watching them run up and down stairs and in and out of doors leaves one breathless. Unfortunately, even the best slapstick has limits (Three Stooges aside), and hoary gags such as simulated sex acts and violence played for laughs are repeated too frequently, producing diminishing comedic returns.

Amy J. Carle delights as the amorous Dotty Oakley playing the frowzy Mrs. Clackett; Rochelle Therrien soldiers forth admirably and energetically as the insufferable diva Brooke Ashton playing the dim-witted ingenue Vicki, and Will Casey offers more than a few chortles as the lovably inept oaf Selsdon Mowbray playing the Burglar. **—Sheri Flanders** ***Noises Off*** *inThrough 3/31: Wed-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Windy City Playhouse, 3014 W. Irving Park, 773-891-8985, windycityplayhouse.com, $45-$85, $35-$75 students, teachers, seniors, industry, and military.*

Evil Dead: The Musical EVAN HANOVER

RR So Godzilla, Mothra, and Gamera go to a funeral. . .

Family drama unfolds with *Small Jokes About Monsters*.

Ryan, the bright, witty, psychologically damaged protagonist of Steven Strafford's dark domestic comedy (played with uncommon power and pathos by Esteban Andres Cruz) begins the play by dividing all comedians into three types: the Godzillas, who come on strong, firing joke after joke; the more subtle Mothras, who hold back but then destroy the audience with a few well-aimed quips; and the Gameras, clumsier than the other two, but equally devastating.

Ryan is not just talking about comics, but about himself and his brothers—and part of the beauty of Strafford's sly, well-crafted play lies in how this metaphor plays out over the course of its 90 minutes. Ryan, the demanding, self-centered extrovert, is indeed a Godzilla, and his brothers John and Derek are, respectively, a Mothra and a Gamera.

Thrown together by their estranged father's funeral, these three difficult "monsters," each unhappy in his own way, joke and bicker and bitch until, following the well-worn formula of family dramas, long-repressed secrets are revealed and the brothers (and the audience) must come to grips with a lot of new, uncomfortable truths.

Strafford adheres pretty closely to the dramatic structure of this kind of play—the ending is pure Chekhov—but his gift for strong dialogue and original characters keeps things from getting too predictable. It helps that this 16th Street Theater production under the direction of Kristina Valada-Viars is well paced and filled with strong actors who know how to make their characters compelling, which keeps the story fascinating and fresh. **—Jack Helbig** ***Small Jokes About Monsters*** *Through 2/16: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; no performance Sun 2/3, 16th Street Theater, 6420 16th St., Berwyn, 708-795-6704, 16thstreettheater.org, $22, $18 low-income, military, and Berwyn residents.*

RR Hazardous workplace

***What We're Up Against* shows that not much has changed for women since 1992.**

Theresa Rebeck's acidic portrait of workplace discrimination, written in 1992 in the wake of the Anita Hill hearings, is still timely. That's probably good news for Rebeck. But it's definitely bad news for women, who are still dragged as ambitious ballbusters if they dare to do things men do (such as run for president).

Compass Theatre, a new Equity company making its debut with Rebeck's play, staged by Lauren Shouse, lands plenty of sharp jabs to the solar plexus. Rebeck shows how often women are undercut not by obvious sexual harassment, but by pernicious microaggressions and gaslighting.

Set in an architecture firm, the play opens with Stu (Charlie Strater) and Ben (Ted James) tossing back scotch and complaining about new hire Eliza (Echaka Agba)—who they assume landed the job by sleeping with a higher-up and who complains about not being given any real work to do. "Women are always just a total fucking nightmare," Stu declares—and Ben agrees.

As Eliza tries and fails to enlist the help of Janice (Denise Hoeflich), the only other woman architect, Rebeck cleverly anatomizes the divide-and-conquer mind-set of internalized misogyny. In Weber (Jeff Kurysz), the hotshot hired after Eliza, she also creates a perfect snapshot of every mediocre bullshitting "visionary" man who believes "mingy" detail work is beneath him but might be just fine for women. Sometimes Rebeck's narrative flirts with being preachy, but for the most part it's funny and enraging in all the right ways. **—Kerry Reid** ***What We're Up Against*** *Through 2/9: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 1/28 and 2/4, 8 PM, and Sat 2/9, 2 PM, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, compasstheatre.org, $35.*

An Acceptable Loss

MOVIES

An Acceptable Loss

Shot in Chicago and on Northwestern University's Evanston campus, this speculative political thriller stumbles through most of its first hour, during which a disgraced former national security analyst (Tika Sumpter) comes out of retirement to accept a distinguished academic appointment, only to arouse protests and attract the sinister attention of a furtive graduate student (Ben Tavassoli). Flashbacks offer insufficient exposition, as we see the professor in her heyday a few years earlier working with her mentor, the then-U.S. vice president (Jamie Lee Curtis), a military hawk who ominously mentions "what happened in Los Angeles." What did happen is never explained, although once the film shifts into higher gear in the second act, it's suggested that some concentrated act of terror occurred, after which the veep—now president—pushed for a massive armed response and left her protege to shoulder the blame. Writer-director Joe Chappelle's premise is intriguing enough, but he could have taken cues from two movies from 1974, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* and Alan J. Pakula's *The Parallax View*, both more effective in tapping the heightened paranoia of dangerous times. **—Andrea Gronvall** *R, 102 min. Wilmette Theatre*

American Promise

For 12 years, Joe Brewster and Michele Stephenson, married professionals in Brooklyn, used a video camera to track the educational progress of their son Idris and his friend Seun Summers as they advanced through the Dalton School, a private K-12 institution in Manhattan where they were among the only black students. The resulting documentary is framed as a sort of upper-class *Hoop Dreams*, measuring the limits of opportunity in America for young men of color, though in practice it more often functions as a self-serving advertisement for the couple's intense, hectoring brand of parenthood. A key complaint is that the kids have to function in a white world to obtain an elite education (Summers transferred to a mostly black public school after eighth grade), which is valid but hardly compares with the problems faced by most American students of any race. On the other hand, most kids don't have to deal with their parents turning their college admissions process into the climax of a movie. **—J.R. Jones 2013** *132 min. Hosted by Eve Ewing. Thu 1/24, 7 PM. Harper Theater.* FREE

Bound

The Wachowskis, who scripted *Assassins*, wrote and directed this adroit and sexy 1996 crime thriller about the hot romance between a gangster's moll (Jennifer Tilly) and the ex-con who's her neighbor (Gina Gershon). Eventually they concoct an elaborate scam to rip off the gangster (Joe Pantoliano)—a money launderer for the mob who temporarily has a couple million dollars. (The laundering here involves literally washing blood off bills.) This gets very suspenseful (as well as fairly gruesome) in spots, and if it never adds up to anything profound, it's still a welcome change to have a lesbian couple as the chief identification figures. With Richard Sarafian. **—Jonathan Rosenbaum 1996** *R, 108 min. Tue 1/29, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Casque d'Or

A radiant Simone Signoret dominates Jacques Becker's 1952 film, which is based on a Paris underworld incident of 1898 that is, in some ways, the French parallel to the legend of Frankie and Johnny. Becker emphasized atmospherics at the expense of psychology, which outraged the literary critics of the time and impressed the young Turks who later made up the New Wave. A turning point for French cinema, although it must be understood in context. With Serge Reggiani and Claude Dauphin. In French with subtitles. **—Dave Kehr 2003** *94 min. 35mm. Sat 1/26, 3 PM, and Thu 1/31, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Citizen Kane

What can you say about the movie that taught you what movies were? The first time I saw *Kane* I discovered the existence of the director; the next dozen or so times taught me what he did—with lights and camera angles, cutting and composition, texture and rhythm. *Kane* (1941) is no longer my favorite Orson Welles film (I'd take *Ambersons*, *Falstaff*, or *Touch of Evil*), but it is still the best place I know of to start thinking about Welles—or for that matter about movies in general. **—Dave Kehr 2012** *PG, 119 min. 35mm. Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the Tuesday screening. Fri 1/26, 2 and 6 PM, and Tue 1/29, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Design for Living

When Ernst Lubitsch's film of Noel Coward's famous farce was released in 1933, Ben Hecht's screenplay was attacked for coarsening Coward, and Lubitsch was ridiculed for casting Gary Cooper, Fredric March, and Miriam Hopkins in the parts played onstage by Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, and Coward himself. Well, maybe it is a little lumpy for Lubitsch, but I think the film more than holds its own. Cooper is a problem, but the bubbles rise in spite of him. Very glossy, very continental, and sometimes very funny. **—Dave Kehr 1985** *90 min. 35mm. Sat 1/26-Sun 1/27, 11:30 AM. Music Box*

RR Distant Voices, Still Lives

It's hard to say what Terence Davies's powerful 1988 masterpiece is about—growing up in a working-class family in Liverpool in the 40s and 50s—without making it sound familiar and lugubrious. In fact, this beautiful memoir, conceivably one of the greatest of all English films, is so startling and original that we may not have the vocabulary to do it justice. Organized achronologically, so that events are perceived more in terms of emotional continuity than of narrative progression, the film concentrates on family events like weddings and funerals and on songs sung at parties and the local pub. Davies's childhood, which was lorded over by a brutal and tyrannical father, was not an easy one, yet the delight shown and conveyed by the well-known songs makes the film cathartic and hopeful as well as sorrowful and tragic. (There are some wonderful laughs as well.) Much of the film emphasizes the bonds between the women in the family and their female friends, though there's nothing doctrinal or polemical about its vision, and the purity and intensity of its emotional thrust are such that all the characters are treated with passion and understanding. The sense of the periods depicted—ranging from the blitz to a mid-50s screening of *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* at the Futurist Cinema—is both precise and luminous. **—Jonathan Rosenbaum 1985** *PG-13, 85 min. Fri 1/25, 4:15 and 8 PM; Sat 1/26, 3 PM; Sun 1/27, 1 PM; Tue 1/29, 6 PM; Wed 1/30, 6 PM; Thu 1/31, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Every Man for Himself

Jean-Luc Godard calls this 1980 production, *Sauve Qui Peut (La Vie)*, his "second first film"—which means both a return to narrative after his brilliant documentary-theoretical work in the 70s and a complete clearing of the decks. You feel him questioning his entire life here, his most basic impulses and ideals, and his honesty is devastating; he emerges as a hollow man, trapped between the limitations of his politics and his sexuality, with barely enough ego left to imagine his own death. Of course, the film's substantial artistry belies Godard's self-negation: with his formal, four-part ordering of the narration, the tension he establishes and exploits between soundtrack and image, and his use of slow motion to analyze and abstract the action, Godard pulls an aesthetic victory from the jaws of utter nihilism. With Isabelle Huppert, Jacques Dutronc, Nathalie Baye, and Marguerite Duras (on the soundtrack only). In French with subtitles. **—Dave Kehr 1985** *87 min. 35mm. Wed 1/30, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Free Solo

This awe-inspiring *National Geographic* documentary is as much a celebration of U.S. parks and wilderness as it is a record of one of the most audacious feats in the history of mountaineering: Alex Honnold's 2017 ascent of Yosemite's 3,000-foot-high El Capitan in under four hours without ropes or backup. Codirectors Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (*Meru*) prepared for three years to film the summit, meticulously planning every possible angle and approach so that they could be ready to go on short notice and also stay out of the athlete's way to avoid endangering his life. Not surprisingly, the small production crew, climbers themselves, share facetime on camera, and thus the movie takes on a Zen-like meta aspect. Equally pleasing is the yin-yang dynamic between the sinewy, boyish, intense Honnold, a UC Berkeley dropout who is philosophical about death, and his petite, irrepressible lover Sanni McCandless, cheerily dedicated to keeping him alive. **—Andrea Gronvall 2018** *PG-13, 100 min. Wed 1/30, 7 PM. Music Box*

Glass

This may not be M. Night Shyamalan's worst movie, though it's surely his most disappointing. The writer-director brings together the principal characters of his *Unbreakable* (2000) and *Split* (2016), two entertaining films that presented comic book-style fantasies in a subdued manner and in believably grim urban settings. Unfortunately he doesn't have anything new to say about the characters; he just surrounds them with other people who discuss what their stories might mean in long stretches of ponderous, flat-footed dialogue. These conversations basically spell out the subtext of Shyamalan's earlier films, as though the filmmaker thought his viewers were too dumb to figure it out for themselves; even worse, they treat the mythology of those films with such unselfconscious reverence that they suggest the filmmaker is terminally infatuated with his own work. The saving grace is Shyamalan's camerawork and visual compositions, which are as striking and expressive as ever; for all his faults, he remains one of the only contemporary Hollywood directors who genuinely believes in mise-en-scene. With James McAvoy, Bruce Willis, Samuel L. Jackson, and Sarah Paulson. **—Ben Sachs** *PG-13, 129 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37*

Grease

A limp, cheaply made version (1978) of the Broadway (ne Chicago) play about growing up cool in the 50s. Director Randal Kleiser, making his theatrical film debut, shows no real sense of how a musical is constructed: the songs are bunched together, the production numbers don't move, and the whole project shifts awkwardly between naturalism and stylization. John Travolta does little with a pallid part (although he does have a chance to dance an unabashedly gratuitous disco number); Olivia Newton-John is merely pallid. **—Dave Kehr 2013** *PG, 110 min. 35mm. Thu 1/31, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Hands Up!

Jerzy Skolimowski's 1967 social allegory was banned in Poland and only released in 1981 in mutilated form (a third of it was reshot by Skolimowski himself); it concerns four successful doctors trying to track down an elusive fifth but finding instead a metaphor of their own compromises and social discontents in a confining railway journey. **—Pat Graham 1985** *Sun 1/27, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

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FILM

The Heiresses

In this crafty debut feature, Paraguayan writer-director Marcelo Martinessi looks at microlevel power dynamics to comment subtly on society at large. His protagonists are a sixtysomething lesbian couple who once occupied a place in high society but are now struggling to make ends meet. At first their slide down the social ladder doesn't change the fundamental nature of their relationship—one still makes all the major decisions, while the other passively goes along—but things take a turn when the dominant partner goes to prison for fraud and the passive one must find a way to support herself. One could interpret the latter woman's growing sense of self-determination as a metaphor for Paraguay coming into its own after a long era of dictatorial rule, but Martinessi doesn't overemphasize this reading; his characters and setting are sharply drawn, and the drama goes down with sly, understated humor. In Spanish with subtitles. **—Ben Sachs** *98 min. Fri 1/25, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 1/26, 7:45 PM; Sun 1/27, 3 PM; Mon 1/28, 8 PM; Tue 1/29, 7:45 PM; Wed 1/30, 8:15 PM; and Thu 1/31, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

The Kid Who Would Be King

Although not in the league of bracing adult fare like John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981), this child-centric update of Arthurian lore outclasses Guy Ritchie's *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword* (2017) by relying more on heart than bombastic CGI. That could be due in part to writer-director Joe Cornish's tighter budget, but it works in his favor: the movie has the freshness, innocence, and energy of youngsters on the threshold of adulthood, embarked on a grand heroic adventure. A bullied schoolboy (Louis Ashbourne Serkis) hides from his tormentors (Tom Taylor, Rhianna Dorris) in a construction site, where he pulls a sword out of a concrete block. His action unleashes an army of fiery horsemen from hell, emissaries of the sorceress Morgana (Rebecca Ferguson), the mythic King Arthur's evil half sister. A powerful wizard (Angus Imrie), the younger incarnation of Morgana's nemesis Merlin (Patrick Stewart), schools the child in self-defense and leadership, and provides goofball comic relief. With Dean Chaumoo and Denise Gough. **—Andrea Gronvall** *PG, 119 min. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City*

The Kid Who Would Be King

Mean Girls

Produced by *Saturday Night Live* creator Lorne Michaels and scripted by Tina Fey, this high school satire (2004) is pleasantly acted and moderately funny, but it lacks the genuine bile that made *Heathers* (1989) so bracing. Lindsay Lohan stars as a pretty teen who enrolls at a North Shore snake pit after being homeschooled in Africa all her life; she falls in with a pair of sarcastic losers but is also recruited by the Plastics, a trio of petty social butterflies. This opens with a dig at gay-bashing evangelicals, but by the end its sole lesbian character has found a boyfriend, suggesting that, after all these years, Michaels's most radical statement remains his blazer-and-blue-jeans look. Mark S. Waters directed. **—J.R. Jones 2013** *PG-13, 97 min. Fri 1/25-Sat 1/26, midnight. Music Box*

On Her Shoulders

Director Alexandria Bombach (*Frame by Frame*) shot this documentary portrait of human rights activist Nadia Murad not long before her subject received the Nobel Peace Prize, and the movie argues persuasively that the prize was well deserved. A member of Iraq's Yazidi minority, Murad lost her family in 2014 when ISIS fighters attacked her village; she was taken prisoner after the attack and lived in subhuman conditions until she escaped. Murad has since used her freedom to tell the world about her experience, speaking to communities, political leaders, and the United Nations. The film follows her through numerous speaking engagements as she relives her trauma in order to educate others about ISIS's attempted genocide of the Yazidis. Bombach valorizes Murad in part by drawing attention to how difficult her activist work is to perform; an early montage shows Murad sitting stoically as newscasters ask the same questions about her abuse at the hands of jihadists. In English and subtitled Arabic. **—Ben Sachs** *94 min. Fri 1/25, 4 PM; Sat 1/26, 7:45 PM; Mon 1/28, 6 PM; and Thu 1/31, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Sanrizuka: Heta Village (Narita: Heta Village

From 1967 to 1974 Japanese documentarian Shinsuke Ogawa lived with the farmers of Sanrizuka, whose village was targeted for demolition to make room for Tokyo's Narita International Airport. Supported by radical students, the farmers protested their eviction, and Ogawa joined in, recording both the long-term struggle and the everyday life of the village. His intense involvement eventually yielded five films with a combined running time of about 15 hours, including the 146-minute *Narita: Heta Village* (1973). Ogawa, with virtuoso cinematographer Masaki Tamura, emphasizes the lifestyle and traditions the farmers are fighting to preserve, and both he and Tamura (a farmer's grandson himself) show a deep sensitivity and responsiveness to these people. My favorite sequences include an interview with a woman while she slices a radish into the shape of a phallus (which she jokingly attaches to sweet potato "testicles"), a candid and affectionate conversation with an 86-year-old woman seated on her porch, and an opening sequence in which Tamura's camera roams around a field to illustrate a farmer's anecdotes. Subjective and highly empathetic, this documentary is less a statement than a friendly conversation: Ogawa can be heard frequently as both narrator and interviewer, the periodic intertitles are no less personal, and the villagers repay the filmmakers' warmth by freely sharing their lives with the camera. **—Jonathan Rosenbaum 1985** *146 min. 16mm. Sat 1/26, 7 PM. Logan Center for the Arts* FREE

Secret Sunshine

A recently widowed woman (Jeon Do-yeon) leaves Seoul to start over in the provincial town where her husband was born. This 2007 feature by Lee Chang-dong (*Oasis*) begins as a quiet drama about mourning but grows steadily darker and more complicated, its unpredictable plot touching on religious fanaticism, mental illness, and even murder. Lee manages all this with surprising evenhandedness, using long takes and understated compositions that emerge organically from the rich characterizations. Song Kang-ho, a comic pres-

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ence in Bong Joon-ho's *Memories of Murder* and *The Host*, is heartbreaking here as the woman's timid suitor; indeed, the characters' failings are realized as precisely as their virtues, and this warts-and-all approach challenges the limits of our empathy. In Korean with subtitles. **—Ben Sachs 2011** *142 min. Mon 1/28, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

The Servant

After more than a decade directing B movies, Joseph Losey graduated to art films with this 1963 feature, the first of many collaborations with Harold Pinter. Dirk Bogarde is the sinister manservant who slowly corrupts his effete employer, James Fox. The film is very studied and smooth, even though it deals in sexual hysteria; it could use some of the roughness and drive of Losey's early work. With Sarah Miles and Patrick Magee. **—Dave Kehr 1985** *116 min. Thu 1/31, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Silicone Soul

Life-size dolls are replacements for human lovers, babies, and female friends in this empathetic documentary about "doll people" and the alternate realities they create. Director Melody Gilbert casts a wide net, primarily following men who maintain sexual and romantic relationships with life-size RealDolls but also visiting women who have been touched by the phenomenon, like an artist who makes realistic baby dolls for seniors with Alzheimer's to hold as part of their "cuddle therapy" and another artist who poses sex dolls in purportedly feminist tableaux. The film's highly effective centerpiece is the story of an odd couple in Chicago, a man and his synthetic "wife" of nearly a decade. When he takes her on dates to the Brookfield Zoo or to his favorite restaurants, what is fascinating is not so much his behavior but how others react to the atypical pair—often mildly, sometimes positively. Gilbert raises the right questions about sexism, modern loneliness, and the slow erosion of the uncanny valley, but without demonizing or even judging her subjects. Instead, she shows how sweet and surprising it can be when humans, faced with difference, choose to be kind. **—Leah Pickett** *70 min. Gilbert and several cast members attend both screenings. Sun 1/27, 5 PM, and Mon 1/28, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

ALSO PLAYING

Being Frank: The Chris Sievey Story

Steve Sullivan directed this documentary about UK comic persona Frank Sidebottom, who appeared at music and comedy events in Manchester for over two decades in his now-iconic papier-mache head, and the man inside the mask, Chris Sievey. *100 min. Fri 1/25-Thu 1/31. At Facet Cinémathèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.*

Burning

Lee Chang-dong directed this South Korean mystery-drama about a socially inept loner who becomes taken with a young woman only to have her disappear after returning from a trip with a stranger in tow. In Korean with subtitles. **2018** *148 min. Sat 1/26, 7 and 9:30 PM, and Sun 1/27, 4 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Deconstructing the Birth of the Beatles

A documentary looking at the early years of the Beatles. Justin Drobinski and Sean Gallagher directed. *88 min. Tue 1/29, 7 PM. Music Box*

Duvariar-Mauern-Walls

Can Candan directed this 2000 US-Turkish documentary about the experiences of Turkish immigrants in Berlin following the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification. In English and subtitled Turkish and German. *83 min. Candan attends the screening. Fri 1/25, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* FREE

F*** Your Hair

Jason Polevoi directed this documentary about a Chicago brewery that pulled its beer from Trump Tower, where it was going to be the house brand, and renamed it "Chinga Tu Pelo" (F*** Your Hair). *38 min. Polevoi and other guests attend the screenings. Showing with '63 Boycott (see separate listing). Fri 1/25, 8:15 PM; Sat 1/26, 5 PM; and Wed 1/30, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Falbalas

Jacques Becker directed this 1945 French romantic drama about a couturier who becomes smitten with his best friend's fiancee. In French with subtitles. *107 min. Sat 1/26, 5 PM, and Wed 1/30, 7:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Found Footage Festival: After Dark

Joe Pickett (the *Onion*) and Nick Prueher (*The Colbert Report*) present a risqué selection of offbeat VHS video finds. *85 min. Sat 1/26, 9:30 PM. Music Box*

Found Footage Festival: Cherished Gems

A collection of the favorite offbeat VHS video finds from previous Found Footage Festivals, presented by Joe Pickett (the *Onion*) and Nick Prueher (*The Colbert Report*). *85 min. Fri 1/25, 9:30 PM. Music Box*

I, Jane Doe

A U.S. soldier marries a Frenchwoman while stationed overseas. When she follows him back to the States, she finds that he's already married. John H. Auer directed this 1948 crime drama. *85 min. Fri 1/25, 7 and 9:30 PM, and Sun 1/27, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Seminole

Budd Boetticher directed this 1953 adventure film about a cavalry officer (Rock Hudson) attempting to befriend the Seminole tribe in Florida. With Barbara Hale and Anthony Quinn. *87 min. 35mm. Wed 1/30, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*

'63 Boycott

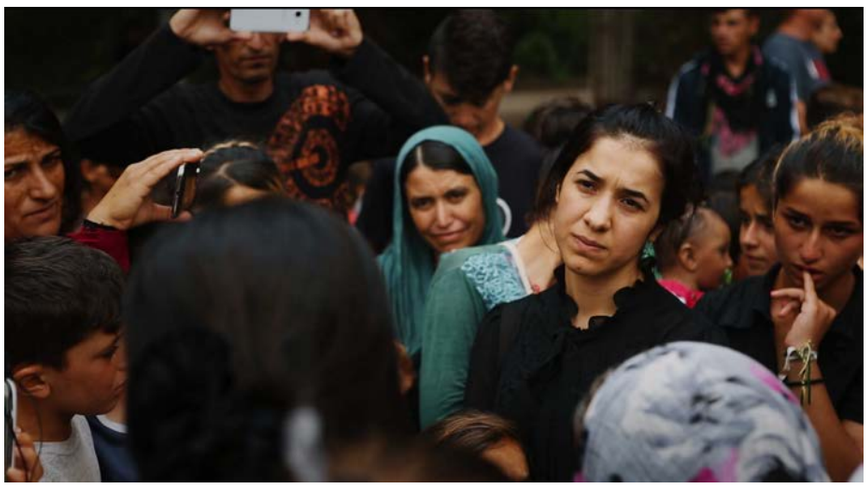
Kartemquin Films founder Gordon Quinn directed this 30-minute documentary about the 1963 boycott through which some 250,000 students protested the segregation of Chicago Public Schools. *30 min. Quinn attends the Friday and Wednesday screenings. Showing with F*** Your Hair* (see separate listing). Fri 1/25, 8:15 PM; Sat 1/26, 5 PM; and Wed 1/30, 6 PM. *Gene Siskel Film Center*

Soleil O

Mauritanian director Med Hondo directed this 1970 French coproduction about a immigrant whose dreams of a better life in Paris meet with a harsh reality. In French with subtitles. *98 min. Wed 1/30, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* FREE

Telesonic 9000

Composer-drummer Dominick Gray performs live to his 2016 found-footage compilation film. *55 min. Sat 1/26, 7 PM. Chicago Filmmakers*



On Her Shoulders

Why won't City Hall fight for Chicago's homegrown music scene?

Members of the Chicago Independent Venue League at their November 29 public meeting: Bruce Finkelman (the Empty Bottle, Thalia Hall, the Promontory), Robert Gomez (Subterranean, Beat Kitchen), Joe Shanahan (Metro, Smart Bar, the GMan Tavern), Ray Quinn (Martyrs'), Katie Tuten (the Hideout), Michael Johnston (Schubas, Lincoln Hall), Billy Helmkamp (Sleeping Village, the Whistler), Tim Tuten (the Hideout) SARAH LARSON

The Chicago Independent Venue League shouldn't have to push back against the Live Nation handouts in the Lincoln Yards development—but the city doesn't protect its own treasures.

By Mark Guarino

Hideout co-owner Katie Tuten addresses the crowd. KRIS LORI

On Thursday, November 29, a group of music venue owners who'd just organized themselves as the Chicago Independent Venue League (CIVL) held a press conference to announce their opposition to Mayor Rahm Emanuel's fast-tracking of Lincoln Yards, a hugely ambitious mixed-use development along the North Branch of the Chicago River. The members of CIVL say the project won't just make the city's homegrown music economy less competitive—it also has the potential to sink it completely.

That's because at the heart of Lincoln Yards—estimated to cost nearly $6 billion and cover at least 54 acres—is a partnership between Chicago developer Sterling Bay and Beverly Hills-based concert promoter Live Nation. The world's largest company of its kind, Live Nation has long been criticized for upending local music scenes by acquiring and consolidating major venues until it has a commanding share of the market.

"We're not against competition, but it's completely different when you think of Live Nation," says Hideout co-owner Katie Tuten, cochair of CIVL—whose founding venues also include Metro, Smart Bar, the GMan Tavern, Thalia Hall, the Empty Bottle, the Promontory, Subterranean, the Beat Kitchen, Schubas, Lincoln Hall, Sleeping Village, the Whistler, and Martyrs'. "They own the venues, they operate the ticketing platform, and they manage the artists and decide where they'll perform," she says. "They have the wherewithal to lose money until they put us out of business. And we're the economic drivers in many neighborhoods."

On Tuesday, January 8, Second Ward alderman Brian Hopkins, citing the will of his constituents, rejected Sterling Bay's proposal for a 20,000-person soccer stadium (run by Live Nation between games) and an entertainment district with three to five venues (all controlled by Live Nation). The developer's revised plan eliminates the stadium and calls for the venues to be scattered, not concentrated in a single district—but despite Hopkins's insistence that Live Nation won't own them, the members of CIVL suspect that the company will end up operating them anyway. Sterling Bay spokesperson Sarah Hamilton wouldn't say that the Live Nation partnership is off the table, but the developer has clearly learned not to talk about it as an exclusive deal: "Any operator has the opportunity to participate," she said. "If they want to open a venue or run a club, they should contact Sterling Bay."

No matter what the city and Sterling Bay ultimately decide to do, Live Nation will remain a threat to Chicago's independent music economy—no one expects the company to cease angling for advantage here. This is a big reason critics of Lincoln Yards have targeted Emanuel. Despite his publicly professed love for Wilco and his habit of stopping by the WXRT studios to promote his agenda, the mayor has a thin record when it comes to creating policies that strengthen the local music scene. Instead of taking a cue from cities such as London, Toronto, Seattle, and Austin, which have created government commissions or partnered with nonprofits to bake in policies that protect and promote their homegrown independent venues, he appears singularly focused on providing a seat at the table to just one player—Live Nation, which already dominates several major silos in the live entertainment industry. The company owns or operates 222 venues internationally, and presents concerts at many more; it represents more than 500 artists via its management division; and in 2010 it merged with the similarly powerful Ticketmaster. Since 2014 Live Nation has also owned a controlling interest in C3 Presents, the producer of Lollapalooza. Ari Emanuel, the mayor's brother, is a Live Nation board member and a significant shareholder in the company.

Chicago is unusual among cities its size because its music scene remains largely democratized—within the city limits, Live Nation

owns only the House of Blues and the Huntington Bank Pavilion at Northerly Island. All the other venues where it presents shows—the Aragon, Subterranean, Kingston Mines, Allstate Arena—are owned by other entities that do business with Live Nation at their discretion. That balance will change, critics fear, if the city green-lights Lincoln Yards.

The PR campaign the mayor has launched in hopes of getting Lincoln Yards approved before he leaves office in April is reminiscent of two previous failed Emanuel crusades that were met with similar skepticism: an attempt to build a museum on the lakefront to house the art collections of Emanuel megadonor George Lucas and a bid to get Amazon's second headquarters. Lincoln Yards has likewise provoked a litany of objections: over its campus of high-rises, over its potential to cause traffic gridlock, over the proposal to use $800 million in tax increment financing (TIF) funds to pay for infrastructure improvements that will largely benefit Sterling Bay. (The city's

Artist's rendering of the Lincoln Yards development COURTESY STERLING BAY

Community Development Commission will vote on the Cortland/Chicago River Tax Increment Financing district on February 19.)

But Emanuel hasn't relented. The Chicago Plan Commission is scheduled to vote on the revised Lincoln Yards project on Thursday, January 24—even though no public meetings have been scheduled since Hopkins rejected the stadium and entertainment district and Sterling Bay agreed to update its master plan. The community hasn't been able to see the current proposal, and in fact there's been no formal opportunity for citizen input since late November. CIVL is one of a chorus of voices demanding that the project be delayed until a new administration takes over.

Described as a city within the city, Lincoln Yards seems destined to be the mayor's legacy project, even as the question of how or whether it serves the public good remains unanswered. Emanuel and Sterling Bay have been vague on several points: how Lincoln Yards will create economic growth, what kind of zoning oversight the city will have during its decade-long construction, even how many venues it will contain and which of those Live Nation will control.

These failures of transparency may give Chicagoans flashbacks to December 2008, when Mayor Richard M. Daley privatized the city's parking meter system for $1.16 billion in a 75-year deal with Morgan Stanley. The move was almost universally unpopular, and matters only got worse when the public later learned that the meters had likely been undervalued by nearly $4 billion.

The members of CIVL are proposing measures they hope will encourage the mayor's office to see the economic value of independent venues to Chicago. They want a voice in city affairs via what they're calling an "economic advisory committee" representing the creative sector. They want a music census, funded by the city, to quantify the value of the existing ecosystem and aid in the creation of a digital map of every local performance venue. They want to designate Chicago a "Music City," with a special office to serve as their advocate within the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). And among other things, they want to hire a "Night Mayor" to focus on issues related to the city's creative nightlife.

"Give us a seat at the table. CIVL members are business people, and we have expertise that is of critical value to the development of this city," says CIVL cochair Robert Gomez, owner of Subterranean and the Beat Kitchen.

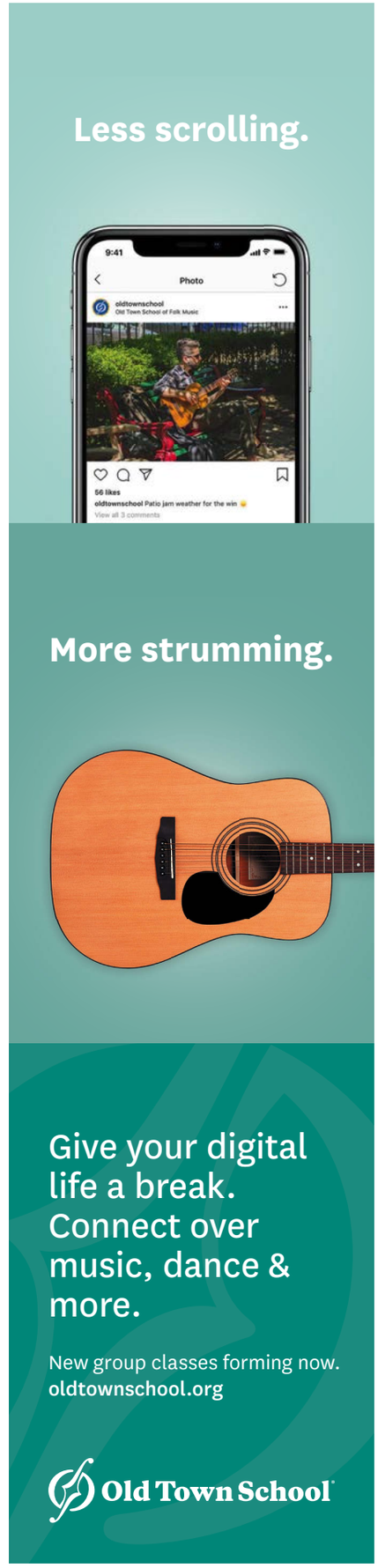
The data shows that the venues deserve the attention—a 2006 report commissioned by the nonprofit Chicago Music Commission from the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago found that in 2004 the city hosted 1,093 shows that generated $80 million in revenue. (The fact that this is the most recent available citywide data is a big part of why CIVL wants a music census.) Even back then, Chicago had the third-largest music workforce in the country, after New York and Los Angeles—its 53,104 employees had a combined payroll of more than $1 billion (though this includes the staff of recording studios, labels, radio stations, and other businesses not directly involved in presenting concerts). And the report further claimed that the benefits of these jobs went beyond the borders of the business: "Statistical analysis of counties nationwide strongly suggests that music employment levels are positively associated with county-level job growth."

Rapid gentrification remains a major danger to any local music economy, and other cities in the U.S. and abroad have dealt with it in ways that Chicago would do well to study. According to the Music Venue Trust, a UK charity launched in 2014, between 2007 and 2015 a quarter of London's music venues shut down, and in the UK at large that number reached 36 percent. Rising real estate values in the city attracted newcomers whose complaints about noise and crowds could doom long-established clubs—that is, if skyrocketing rents didn't finish them off first. Making things worse, the venues had no representation at City Hall, and their owners generally lacked the time and knowledge to navigate planning regulations and other red tape.

The Music Venue Trust has played an important role in giving venues a coherent voice. Now representing 500 venues across the UK, it not only intercedes with government officials to advocate for venues but also serves as an information resource for both sides. Because the organization acts independently of the venues themselves, it has an air of neutrality, says CEO and founder Mark Davyd. Its message is cultural as well as economic: Davyd frequently makes the point that current British pop stars such as Ed Sheeran learned their craft in small rooms. By the MVT's reckoning, Sheeran played 366 venues in the UK with a capacity of fewer than 300 before he became a household name. Of those venues, only 216 remain open today.

"How many festival and stadium headliners will we produce when all the clubs are gone?" Davyd asks.

The organization won one of its greatest victories to date in 2018, when it convinced London mayor Sadiq Khan to adopt the "agent of change" principle, which requires developers to assume responsibility for ➔



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any negative impacts their projects create. For music venues, this means developers must properly soundproof housing built in entertainment districts—that is, it's not the job of the decades-old music club next door to forestall complaints from residents of new condos when it continues to host bands past midnight.

Versions of the agent of change principle have also become law in smaller cities such as San Francisco, Toronto, and Melbourne and Brisbane in Australia. The Music Venue Trust made it happen in London with nearly three years of work, including lobbying, a petition signed by 30,000 people, and support from homegrown stars such as Frank Turner and Paul McCartney.

"This does work," Davyd says. "When you have an effective city government that wants to think about culture and the pipeline of talent, it is very receptive to the importance of small venues where people can start their careers."

One reason cities don't often think of music venues as economically valuable is that they're micro businesses—any one venue is too small to stand out from the pack, and they rarely work together as a bloc to force the city to think of their industry as a sector unto itself. "The majority of clubs operate under the radar," says Amy Terrill, executive vice president of Music Canada, a nonprofit trade association formed in 1964. "That's one of the first challenges that we have as an industry, and that's why educating people is so important—because it's just not obvious to someone on the outside."

Music Canada has already convinced Toronto to designate itself a "Music City," a way of declaring (especially to outside stakeholders) that the local music industry can deliver employment and other economic benefits as well as cultural and social ones. Once a city allies with its music industry, Terrill says, it can create a range of club-friendly policies around parking and transportation, noise bylaws, venue and liquor licensing, and land use.

One way to persuade a city that it must protect its music economy is to explain how vulnerable it is, says Davyd. "The role of an independent, small, grassroots music venue is to do something that is economically stupid: to put on music that nobody likes yet," he explains. "In terms of business, it's a weird thing to do, and because it's an economically fragile model, any tiny external factor can actually shut a venue."

The fate of beloved Lincoln Park rock club Lounge Ax is an instructive example. It shut its doors for good in early 2000, having suffered a drawn-out death by a thousand cuts. In 1995 a new condominium owner in a high-rise behind the club started making noise complaints, which led to a charge from the city that, due to recent regulatory changes, Lounge Ax no longer had the proper license. The club was ordered to close, but it stayed open and fought, racking up thousands of dollars in citations and legal bills. Gentrification ultimately ended Lounge Ax's 12-year run, but the city's rigid approach to the noise complaints and its muddled licensing rules made a difficult situation impossible.

"The liquor commissioner at the time didn't have a clue as to who we were or what we were doing, or why we possibly could be important to him. We were just a bar that was causing some problems because some person who didn't go to the bar was calling him," Lounge Ax co-owner Julia Adams says. "There was no task force or anyone who understood anything about music at the city."

CIVL cochair Robert Gomez (at the microphone) owns Subterranean and the Beat Kitchen. KRIS LORI

Rapid gentrification remains a major danger to any local music economy, and other cities in the U.S. and abroad have dealt with it in ways that Chicago would do well to study.

Having an advocate at City Hall who understands the music business is critical, says Terrill. "Politicians want to understand what you can do to provide good jobs and tax income, so you have to tell the story in those terms," she says. "We were very fortunate, because we had a councillor who really cared about our issues and who became our internal champion, and we had two successive mayors who were really supportive. Once we framed it into the kind of language that would appeal to them, they got on board."

Chicago often seems to lack the political will to look out for its music scene, but the Emanuel administration has taken one important step to help small venues: it cut their taxes last year. The mayor's 2018 budget eliminated the amusement tax for live cultural events in venues with capacities of fewer than 1,500—superseding a long-standing regulation that imposed a 5 percent tax on every ticket sold by venues with capacities of more than 750. The old policy put venues as small as Metro on equal footing with the United Center; under the new system, all venues bigger than 1,500 pay a 9 percent tax.

At the time, Emanuel described live music venues as "part of the fabric of our communities, and a part of what makes Chicago so unique" in a prepared statement. "I don't think we should stifle the culture of our neighborhoods by taxing Thalia Hall in Pilsen or the Metro in Lakeview at the same rate we're taxing a 40,000-seat concert venue," he said. Last year the city's Community Development Commission also approved up to $13 million in TIF funding as part of a $75 million rehabilitation of the 94-year-old Uptown Theatre, owned by long-standing local independent promoter Jam Productions.

The greatest music advocate in Chicago government remains DCASE commissioner Mark Kelly, who has long recognized that the city needs to improve outreach to the music community. Since appointed in 2016, he's helped create programs that highlight the diversity and history of the city's music communities, among them the children's concert series Juicebox and the Cultural Center exhibit "Bronzeville Echoes," which honors that neighborhood's history as an incubator for ragtime, jazz, and blues. Kelly believes that CIVL represents an important step in organizing Chicago's clubs, and he likens its potential role to that of See Chicago Dance, a nonprofit coalition of dance organizations.

Music venues haven't been a sector, he says. "They desperately need to be one. As they become more of a sector, we'll have someone to work with."

DCASE sees Chicago music as much bigger than the club scene, Kelly says, and in practice this means the department tends to focus on the nonprofit world—it awards hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to organizations such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Eighth Blackbird, the Hyde Park Jazz Festival, and the Jazz Institute of Chicago. DCASE also makes grants to projects by individual artists and presents free music throughout the city, including major downtown festivals devoted to blues, jazz, house, international music, and more.

Kelly would like to see his department promote Chicago music with something analogous to 2019's inaugural "Year of Chicago Theatre" campaign, a citywide push that hopes to unite the local theater community and reach an international audience through promotions, grants, events, displays, and more. "We're going to learn about what we did for the Year of Chicago Theatre and then move this idea forward," he says. "I can't imagine in our future we won't do a Year of Chicago Music. It's not just supporting the clubs, but it's about getting new branding for the whole scene."

But Kelly stops short of endorsing CIVL proposals such as the economic advisory committee and the Night Mayor position—he's not convinced that either would change the economic forces that affect music venues. The role of DCASE, he explains, is to assist CIVL in forming partnerships with other local government agencies, such as city tourism office Choose Chicago. "What I see us doing

is helping push out a compelling message to the world that you need to come here because the music scene is incredible. At the same time, we're not just about supporting the local clubs, because music is way bigger than the clubs," he says. "We're thinking far bigger and more ambitious."

DCASE may worry about the optics of supporting the for-profit music sector as a cultural resource, but other cities are already getting comfortable with the idea. Rick Carney, vice chairman of the Music Commission in Austin, Texas, whose scene is as diverse as Chicago's, doesn't see protecting for-profit clubs as "giving them special treatment." His group consists of 11 volunteers appointed by the city to advise it on venue-friendly policies.

"I see us as advocates," Carney says. "The hospitality industry and the hotel industry have advocates as well. We are working on behalf of the culture of the city, more than any one business. We see music as much of a natural resource as Barton Springs."

Over the past couple years, Austin's Music Commission has worked with the city and with neighborhood associations to adjust noise curfews in the busy Red River Cultural District, which has allowed its open-air venues to extend their hours on Thursdays and weekends. The commission says overall revenues have increased 15 percent since the change. "Anything we can do to put more money into the pockets of musicians and clubs, we're going to try to do that," Carney says. The commission is also working to get an agent of change bill passed in Austin.

Like Chicago, Austin has an affordability crisis, though in its case it's due to a tech boom driving up property values. Carney believes that cities need to go beyond promoting their culture and take decisive action to protect it. "We want to make sure we preserve what we have. So much of Austin's success is built on this culture. The high-tech companies came here because they liked the vibe of the city and because it's a place people want to live," he says. "If we can't take care of what we have, we can't guarantee we'll have any of those things."

Lincoln Yards has swiftly become an issue in the race to replace Emanuel in April, though the question of subsidizing a powerful private developer has attracted more attention than the question of protecting Chicago's homegrown music scene. The majority of candidates agree that Emanuel should be out of office before the city decides whether Sterling Bay receives TIF money. But Lori Lightfoot, a former federal prosecutor and police board president, goes further, saying that Chicago needs to treat its music community "with more care than we do now."

Lightfoot sees this as a matter of long-term thinking and basic equity. "We have to be fair and protective of these kinds of music venues before we support the next shiny object that puts them and their employees at risk," she says. "It just can't be the big boys who get the benefits and resources. We ought to be treating the music community right at all levels."

Other candidates weren't as specific, and only some of them mentioned the music community explicitly. "As someone who is a fan of the Hideout, I'd hate to see anything that would hurt them," says Susana Mendoza, the state comptroller, though she admits she needs to learn more about the situation.

Cook County Board president Toni Preckwinkle focuses on the TIF question, saying that it "doesn't make sense" for public money to be used "for megaprojects in parts of the city that might be developed anyway without them." Community organizer Amara Enyia likewise characterizes Lincoln Yards as an example of "disparity" playing out in the city. "The different club owners don't have as much clout as the large-scale developers. Yet [the club owners] are an incredibly diverse group and provide a service to residents in the city of Chicago, and they have a right to advocate what their needs are. But if they don't have the money that can get you the political clout, it's not easy. I would definitely slow that project down."

Cities that have effectively partnered with their music scenes tend to treat those scenes' commercial, fine arts, and nonprofit sectors as part of the same entity, but Chicago has historically seen commercial operations as bars first and creative incubators second. Until that changes, the venues will continue to face an uphill battle to get the change they want from City Hall.

Davyd says that smart development nurtures creative hubs instead of crowding them out, with the understanding that they help a city's long game when it comes to quality of life—a company like Live Nation knows what to do with established artists, but it can't maintain the grassroots networks that foster that talent. Not even an apex predator can survive without an ecosystem in place.

"It is fundamentally wrong for a city government to distort a marketplace with corporate welfare without addressing the entire sector," he adds. "If I was Live Nation, I would be campaigning the mayor of Chicago *for* small venues. Otherwise Chicago ends up with some very fancy but entirely empty multipurpose venues where nobody goes because there is no one to play them."

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IN ROTATION

A *Reader* staffer shares three musical obsessions, then asks someone (who asks someone else) to take a turn.

Travis Scott's Astroworld: Wish You Were Here Tour COURTESY OF @LANTISRUSS VIA TWITTER

Luca Cimarusti

Reader music listings coordinator

Travis Scott's Astroworld: Wish You Were Here Tour Travis Scott's go-to catchphrase is an enthusiastic "It's lit!"—and there are really no better six letters to sum up his live show. As far as stage production goes, I've never seen anything like this: two stages, pyrotechnics, lasers, fireworks, a giant inflatable astronaut wearing Air Jordans, confetti cannons spewing fake dollar bills, and not one but two roller coasters. Travis is an incredible performer too, losing his mind amid all the chaos. This tour comes back to town in February, and I might go again. It's that good.

Deadlife As far as depressive one-man-band black metal goes, it's tough to top Sweden's Deadlife. Based on behind-the-beat sludge rather than blastbeat fury, the many, many songs in Deadlife's massive discography are as beautiful and mournful as they are harsh and brutal. The project, helmed by a man who goes by Rafn, just seems to be getting better as time goes on—on all six of last year's releases (six!), the material is among his best and most complex yet.

Paiste 2000 series I feel like I've discovered a little secret here, and I'm nervous to let the world know about it. Paiste made this semi-pro cymbal line for a six-year run in the late 80 and early 90s. They sound great and look super sharp (with brilliant finish options and slick blue labels), and best of all, everybody seems to have forgotten about them—so you can get them used for really cheap. Now that the secret's out, I need to buy up as many as possible before the prices start climbing.

Mustafa Daka

Drummer for the Brokedowns

The Last Waltz Before I was familiar with the Band, a roommate got me to watch *The Last Waltz* on laser disc through a bomb-ass stereo system. Scorsese does a great job combining documentary and concert film, and you can see the blossoming of his work relationship with Robbie Robertson—though true fans know that the rest of the band thought the film painted Robertson in a better light than them. The actual concert was a shit show but also must have kicked so much ass.

Jon Theodore The first time I heard the Mars Volta's *De-loused in the Comatorium*, Jon Theodore's drumming immediately stuck out. He reminded me of John Bonham and Buddy Rich—at times he played spastic, jazzy, funky, proggy, jammy shit, and at other times he was super basic and solid. He was one of the first drummers I noticed using stacked cymbals (and no double bass pedal). Mario Rubalcaba and Jon Theodore are my favorite heavy-hitting drummers—I love Nate Smith, but Theodore brings the pain!

Jon Theodore with Queens of the Stone Age at the 2014 Reading Festival VIA YOUTUBE

The original Le Pig studio In 1992 Trent Reznor rented a house at 10050 Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon north of Beverly Hills, where he built a studio named Le Pig—the same house where Sharon Tate and four other people died at the hands of the Manson Family. He recorded most of *The Downward Spiral* there, but after he was called out by Tate's sister, he moved out and the house was demolished. He did keep the front door—which had had "pig" written on it in Tate's blood—and install it at his new studio.

The cover of Full Sun's *Thinkin About It*

Jason Smith

Guitarist and vocalist for Rad Payoff

Van Halen, "Unchained" I went my whole life hating on Van Halen. Then one day in 2017, my bandmate Jon Olson cranked *Van Halen II* in the Astro and I fell head over heels. I became a full-on fanboy, and like-minded friends and I would run through each album and dissect it, just like when we were kids. By the time I got into *Fair Warning*, I was obsessed with the song "Unchained." I've listened to it two or three times a day for most of the past year. Despite arguments with bandmates and strangers online, I still believe it's the best song ever written. Change my mind.

Run the Jewels Another case where I was late to the game. My wife has always been into hip-hop, and I've generally liked what she's played for me. But when she put on "Oh My Darling Don't Cry" in our car, my mind melted. RTJ's jams are so heavy and boastful, and we've spent the past few months pounding whiskey in the kitchen and chiming in on our favorite lines ("We are the murderous pair / That went to jail and we murdered the murderers there"). I feel badass just listening to it.

Full Sun, *Thinkin About It* Sweet Pete of Let's Pretend Records stayed with me during Ian's Party and brought me goodies, including this LP. Both Full Sun and the label are from Bloomington, and there must be something in the water there—many of my favorite bands over the past 15 years hail from southern Indiana. *Thinkin About It* ticks all my boxes: lo-fi, loud guitars, tight vocal harmonies, fast drums. If you don't fall in love with its opening track, "Vultures," then I can't save you.

ALL ALL AGES FREE

PICK OF THE WEEK

The Soft Moon confront the past through moody, industrial darkwave

THE SOFT MOON, HIDE, THOOM, DJ SETS BY THE PIRATE TWINS
Thu 1/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, $16-$20. 17+

LED BY SINGER-SONGWRITER and multi-instrumentalist Luis Vasquez, Oakland's the Soft Moon create a visceral mix of darkwave, industrial, and postpunk music that recalls the heyday of 1980s counterculture. Nearly a year after releasing their fourth LP, *Criminal* (Sacred Bones), the group are on the road with a reworking of that album, November's *Criminal Remixed*, in their back pocket. If *Criminal* is the tortured sound of Vasquez coping with the abuse he suffered as a child and guilt from his subsequent abusive behavior, then *Criminal Remixed* is the sound of that guilt fueling a drug-induced dance-party nightmare. Both records stand on their own merits, but the opening track of *Criminal*, "Burn," is musically and lyrically a great introduction for the uninitiated. Over alternately reverb-treated and distorted postpunk guitar, cavorting bass lines, and propulsive beats, Vasquez sings, "Eyes / Reflecting the person that I am / And it burns / I wish I could be somebody else / 'Cause it burns." Live, Vasquez is joined by bassist Luigi Pianezzola and drummer Matteo Vallicelli, who create a sonic tension that pairs nicely with the moody lights of their shows. But as dour as the Soft Moon may come across in their performances, the hypnotic, post-industrial dirges of their tourmates, Chicago's Hide, are even darker. Break out your black-heart emojis for a night of emotive industrial gloom. —SCOTT MORROW

THURSDAY24

MINERAL *Tancred opens. 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, $35, $30 in advance. 21+*

Earlier this decade, new bands recontextualizing 90s emo and the torrent of 90s emo bands reuniting (even for just a few anniversary tours) provoked a surge of interest, but it's been petering out over the past couple years. This has led to situations such as elder statesmen Giants Chair playing a rare reunion show in late 2017 to a half-filled room at Chop Shop. It's also meant a bit less anticipation around shows by highly influential Texas outfit Mineral than when they first regrouped in 2014. That is, except for where it counts: among their fans and, most important, among the musicians in the band. Mineral broke up in 1997 because they'd had enough—even though they'd already signed a contract with Interscope (for an album they'd never make). Fifteen years later, they were inspired to reunite when Jimmy Eat World's Jim Atkins asked them to play at his band's 20th anniversary. While that show never materialized, it led to Mineral reissuing their two albums, 1997's *The Power of Failing* and 1998's *End Serenading*. Now the band are back on the road behind their first new material in two decades, *One Day When We Are Young* (Mineral Deposits), a two-song ten-inch packaged with a book that celebrates the group's 25th anniversary. The gushing guitars that open "Aurora" convey the effervescent euphoria that elevated Mineral to near-mythical status after their demise, and as the song continues it reveals where they could go in the future; the placid multitracked vocal melodies that blossom during the bridge move with a patient vigor that suggests Mineral still have untapped creative resources. —LEOR GALIL

THE SOFT MOON *See Pick of the Week at left. Hide and Thoom open, with DJ sets by the Pirate Twins. 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, $16-$20. 17+*

JUAN WAUTERS *Charlie Reed opens. 9 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, $12. 21+*

Born in Montevideo, Uruguay, Juan Wauters moved to Queens with his father in 2002, when he was 17, and worked alongside him at a picture-frame ➔

Mineral PETER BESTE

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2/23 Témé Tan
3/21 Avishai Cohen (at Constellation)
3/28 Robert Ellis - Texas Piano Man with special guest Ian O'Neil (of Deer Tick)
5/1 Omara Portuondo
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 24 8PM
Sammy Miller and The Congregation

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26 8PM
A Case of Two: Joni & Leonard Uncovered

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 7PM
Kasey Chambers
Campfire Tour USA 2019 • with guest Carly Burruss

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1 7:30PM
WBEZ Podcast Passport Presents
NPR'S Embedded

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1 8PM
Dead Horses with special guest
The Brother Brothers • In Szold Hall

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9 8PM
Masters of Hawaiian Music:
George Kahumoku Kr., Nathan Aweau & Kawika Kahiapo

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10 7PM
Mariachi Los Camperos

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10 8PM
Kitka In Szold Hall

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15 8PM
Judy Collins

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16 8PM
Bonnie Koloc

ACROSS THE STREET IN SZOLD HALL
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1/30 Beppe Gambetta

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MUSIC

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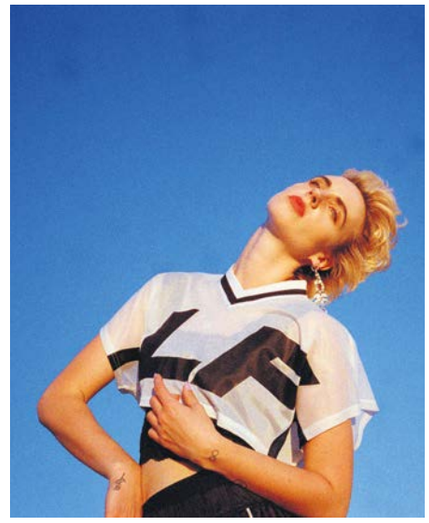
factory to save money to bring over the rest of the family. In 2008, having picked up the guitar, he got together with some neighborhood friends to start lo-fi garage band the Beets, which became a favorite on the DIY circuit in New York and beyond. After a few years Wauters also began a solo project, whose first two albums—2014's *N.A.P. North American Poetry* and 2015's *Who Me?*—trade some of the Beets' irreverent rock influences for sunny, 70s-style folk rock, with his effervescent voice flowing over laid-back fingerpicked guitar. As lovely as they are, those records leave the impression of an artist in search of his voice, and in 2017 Wauters headed to Mexico City to write his next album, only to leave to take a film role in Argentina. Once that was done, though, he set out on an adventure through Latin America, recording equipment in tow, and collaborated with local musicians he met along the way. The new LP *La Onda de Juan Pablo*, the first of three Wauters plans to release this year, contains music recorded in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, and New York. The songs combine his usual friendly charisma with the spirit, musical traditions, and folk instrumentation of the places they were recorded. Wauters also sings the whole album in his native language (a first for him), but even if you don't know a word of Spanish, his message comes through clear: make the most of life, no matter your circumstances. As the saying goes, "Home is where you are," and Wauters embodies it throughout *La Onda*. **—Jamie Ludwig**

FRIDAY25

CONFLICT ***Cemetery and the Breathing Light open. 10 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, $17, $15 in advance. 17+***

London's Conflict are one of the original anarchist punk bands, and though it's been nearly four decades since they formed, their Thatcher-honed rage feels as relevant in today's world as ever. Driven by original vocalist Colin Jerwood, the group hew to politics that are far more from the punch-a-Nazi school of activism than the let's-sit-around-and-discourse model—and they don't shy away from taking the left to task nearly as much as the right. Conflict's sharp, focused, and dense catalog holds up better than those of many of their 80s peers (though drummer Francisco "Paco" Carreno, who died in 2015, is sorely missed). After playing a raw set at Riot Fest last year that left many local fans wanting more, they're back in town—and in close quarters—as part of a short U.S. jaunt. Conflict's strengths lie in Jerwood's uncompromising guts, his utter commitment to his music and his message, and the big heart he has underneath it all—just read his 2015 interview with *13 Stitches*, where he waxes poetic about the time Joe Strummer refused to give him an autograph and insisted on a hug instead. **—Monica Kendrick**

Lemon Twigs COURTESY HIGH ROAD TOURING



MØ FRYD FRYDENDAH

LEMON TWIGS ***Jackie Cohen and Jungle Green open. 9 PM, Metro, 3703 N. Clark, $21, $18 in advance. 18+***

On *Do Hollywood*, the 2016 debut full-length from Long Island duo the Lemon Twigs, barely-of-drinking-age brothers Brian and Michael D'Addario show off their impressive chops and unending appreciation of Todd Rundgren. The album made a splash, exciting old rockers while introducing a whole new generation to the lush prog-glam underbelly of the 1970s. On the follow-up, August's *Go to School* (4AD), the D'Addario brothers get even more ambitious—they've written and recorded a bizarre rock opera that tells the story of a chimpanzee who's raised by humans and tormented by his peers at the neighborhood school. As a whole, *Go to School* isn't great: its 16 tracks try to cram in too many ideas, its flat production hinders the storytelling, and the way the D'Addario brothers use their voices to play different characters in the narrative comes across as goofy. But it's not a total dud—in certain moments the Lemon Twigs shine brighter than ever before. Album opener "Never in My Arms, Always in My Heart" showcases their pitch-perfect, layered vocal harmonies, and seriously ripping musi-

Shamir JASON MACDONALD

cality; my personal favorite, "Queen of My School," sounds like an honest-to-goodness outtake from Big Star's *Radio City*. Sure, *Go to School* doesn't reach the greatness of the Lemon Twigs' first album, but the D'Addario brothers are still young. Everyone makes mistakes, and this is a minor one—I think these guys are going to turn out just fine. **—Luca Cimarusti**

***MØ** Abra opens. 8 PM, the Vic, 3145 N. Sheffield, $30. 18+*

After my first listen to last year's *Forever Neverland* (Columbia), the latest full-length from Danish singer-songwriter MØ, I realized that I had stumbled into a bizarre experiment. When I listened to the electro-pop album on Spotify, I hardly noticed the typically disruptive between-song ads (no, I don't have a Spotify subscription—what of it?). I read this result a couple of different ways, neither wholly negative or positive. Ultimately, though the record is being spun as a sort of art-pop tour de force in line with the work of luminaries such as Grimes, it's mostly just a bunch of middle-of-the-road club bangers. While there are occasionally fascinating rhythms and interesting vocal flows (on "Nostalgia" she delivers some lines like a slam poet), those elements are trumped by sweeping, echo-laden choruses and that lame cascading synth waterfall you've heard 1,000 times before. Though you really can feel MØ committing to each and every breakdown, you might not even notice the collabs with Diplo ("Sun in Our Eyes") and Charli XCX ("If It's Over") if you didn't consult the liner notes, and ultimately *Forever Neverland* seems a little overworked—which might explain the four-plus-year stretch since her debut full-length, *Bikini Daze*. All that said, if one of the record's five singles dropped at the club while you were out on the dance floor it wouldn't make you *stop* moving. **—Kevin Warwick**

SHAMIR *Melo Makes Music opens. 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, $18, $15 in advance, 21+*

Shamir rose to the spotlight with the release of his 2014 song "On the Regular," but though the dancy, cleanly produced music made the singer-songwriter what he calls an "accidental pop star," it pigeonholed him into a stylistic box that proved detrimental to his creativity. With the popularity of that single and his 2015 debut album, *Ratchet* (XL), Shamir found himself facing a question that plagues many rising artists after their first brushes with success: How can you change up your sound when doing so goes against the expectations of your label and audience as well as mainstream trends? All that pressure led him to consider quitting music and triggered a struggle with mental illness (he's since become open about being diagnosed as bipolar, to help destigmatize mental health conditions). But with 2017's *Hope and Revelation* and this past year's *Resolution*, Shamir seems to have found the creative freedom he longed for. On the new record in particular, he's incorporated more rock instrumentation than pop, and his emotional songs show his considerable growth as a songwriter. On "Panic," his distinct countertenor voice floats over crunchy, dirty guitars as he sings, "I thought that I would fall apart / I thought there was something wrong with my heart." His vocal style meshes at least as well with his more recent rock sound as it did with his early, dancier tunes. If Shamir's past couple years are any indication of his ambition and talent, even he might not know what his future music will be like—other than sincere and pure. **—Izzy Yellen**

THAIR *Carlile and Akenya open. 9 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, $13, $10 in advance. 18+*

As the singer for local R&B band Astro Samurai, Thair has shown he has the fresh skills and ➔

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magnetic allure to hypnotize a crowd. That serves him well in his solo project, in which he makes huge, colorful collage pop. Thair's self-released 2018 debut EP, *Summer Luhh*, has a rough-hewn DIY charm; its lo-fi electronic clacks and occasionally chintzy synth tones help make his loftiest ideas feel closer to earth. The clap-happy "Thotty Dysmorphia" demonstrates Thair's ability to build big club tracks with layers of unpolished raw material, while the slyly sumptuous "Handle Me" spotlights his impressive vocal range. Though Thair can already do a lot with a little, I imagine what he's accomplished on *Summer Luhh* will open him up to spaces where he can expand his palette. **—Leor Galil**

Thair
ERIK M. KOMMER

SATURDAY26

BLACK PRAXIS SOUND PROJECT *7 PM, Transition East, 2548 E. 83rd, $10.* AACM

For decades, musicians around the world have found free jazz to be a sturdy and flexible platform. Musicians as varied as German reed player Peter Brötzmann, South African drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo, and Japanese-American multi-instrumentalist Tatsu Aoki have expressed their cultural and personal identities through the form. But its original practitioners were African-Americans, and artists such as John and Alice Coltrane, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and Nicole Mitchell have used it to articulate the cultural heritage and unique challenges that black Americans face. Black Praxis Sound Project is a new ensemble from that tradition. The group came into being when Davu Seru—a drummer from Saint Paul, Minnesota, whose adroit playing has uplifted the music of Rafael Toral, George Cartwright, and his own No Territory Band—visited Chicago in 2018 to play with the Microcosmic Sound Orchestra. Seru and Orchestra multi-instrumentalists David Boykin and Eliel Sherman Storey began a separate endeavor last fall that intends to bring together African-American free-jazz musicians to perform work that, according to a written statement, "embodies principles of self-determination, community wellness, and self-mastery and which will outlive the boundaries of period and genre." An early performance recorded last November at Storey's space, Transition East, combines imploring saxophone phrases with layers of percussion in ways that recall Sun Ra and the Art Ensemble. For this concert, the original trio will be joined by like-minded Baltimore-based saxophonist Jamal Moore. **—Bill Meyer**

DEFCEE *J Bambii, Crashprezz, Clew Rock, and DJ Na$im Williams open. 10 PM, Tonic Room, 2447 N. Halsted, $10. 21+*

Chicago rapper and educator Defcee is one of the great talents in this city, and he so actively supports the local music community that you're even more likely to catch him rocking in crowds than performing in front of them. As he raps on the sprawling 2018 Soundcloud single "Summer Courses," atop a thin, funky synth line and wistful string samples, "I'm the white rapper with no name at the Pivot shows, diddy boppin' / Just me and these beats, but I'm frontin' like the city's watching." Defcee raps as if all of Chicago depends on it, rounding every syllable off and delivering it cleanly with a sharp sense of purpose. But he's a craftsman who knows how to have fun, and you can't help but get the feeling that he enjoys the creative process. Last month's *A Mixtape as God Intended, Vol. 1* is a mixtape in the classic sense—and not just because local hip-hop label Machine Wash Music released a cassette version with a J-card that jacks the layout of old Maxwell tape inserts. It plays as a single 19-minute track, with its moods and instrumentals separated by introductions from Defcee's pals in the scene, including rapper Joseph Chilliams and producer and DJ Green Sllime. Defcee illustrates his world within the sprawling Chicago scene throughout the recording, frequently referencing his fellow local hip-hop artists: "Last seen at the bar arguing with two Tomorrow Kings / Asking Rich to borrow rings to rock at the Bada-Bing." "Rich" is Rich Jones, whose monthly hip-hop series, All Smiles, hosts Defcee's belated *Mixtape* release party tonight. Opener J Bambii dropped the three-song *Retrograde* just days before the end of 2018; the EP's light funk synths, tender soul keys, and gentle percussion shadow her every lyrical twist and turn. **—Leor Galil**

NAO *Xavier Omar, Sat 1/26, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 2047 N. Milwaukee, $29. 17+*

Nao is a British singer whose music nestles in the space between neosoul and the new generation of alternative arty R&B. Her light, dexterous vocals have some of the texture of Billie Holiday, while electronic soundscapes on tracks such as "Another Lifetime," from 2018's *Saturn* (RCA), suggest a mellower FKA Twigs. At times, Nao's contradictory impulses leave her mired neither here nor there; "Love Supreme" weds a Coltrane title to a default midtempo beat and banal lyrics about "palm trees

Nao
COURTESY RCA RECORDS

and breeze." But in her best moments, such as on "Drive and Disconnect," she fuses her nostalgia and experimentation into a seamless, fizzing groove. The song starts with an extensive gentle funk sway, then starts to dissolve into a jazz-fusion piano motif in which two melody lines layer over each other and create lovely off-kilter voicings. "Curiosity" is a more typical Nao effort; a throbbing slow jam in the sensual old style with lyrics to match ("Fingertips to trace my lips / Tension till the moment gives"), with echoing electronic production and multitracked vocals that slide into the future. Though Nao sings "I'm here to fulfill your curiosity," her music is less about novelty than about extending a tradition, by showing that the R&B of tomorrow and yesterday can get it on together. —Noah Berlatsky

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OVEF OW (EP RELEASE)
BLEACH PARTY
BABY MONEY & THE DOWN PAYMENTS

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2.6 MARCUS JOHNSON WITH SPECIAL GUEST KATHY KOSINS
2.9 ANDERS OSBORNE
2.10 ANITA WILSON WITH DANTE HALL
2.14-16 10,000 MANIACS- ANNUAL VALENTINE'S DAY RUN
2.18 DONAVON FRANKENREITER
2.22-23 BOBBY MCFERRIN & GIMME5: CIRCLESONGS
2.25-26 STEVE EARLE WITH SHANNON MCNALLY
3.3 JD SOUTHER & KARLA BONOFF
3.4-5 AARON NEVILLE

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1.29-30 RACHAEL YAMAGATA WITH RADNOR & LEE

1.31-2.2 ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO WITH DON ANTONIO BAND THE CROSSING TOUR

2.4-5 MS. LISA FISCHER & GRAND BATON

UPCOMING SHOWS

1.27 CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER PLAYERS: CAFÉ CULTURE
2.3 3RD ANNUAL HAPPY BIRTHDAY LANGSTON HUGHES: A CELEBRATION IN POETRY, PROSE & SONG FEATURING REGINA TAYLOR, MALCOLM LONDON, TERISA GRIFFIN AND MORE
2.8 MARC ROBERGE (OF O.A.R.)
2.10 FOX CROSSING STRINGBAND - ALBUM RELEASE BRUNCH SHOW
2.11 RUEN BROTHERS
2.12 HUDSON TAYLOR WITH CRAIG STRICKLAND
2.13 PATRIZIO BUANNE
2.17 CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER PLAYERS: ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE
2.17 KANDACE SPRINGS
2.19 VICTOR GARCIA
2.20-21 PROCOL HARUM
2.24 THE FOUR C NOTES - FRANKIE VALLI TRIBUTE
2.24 FUNKADESI
2.27 ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY- JAZZ GOES TO THE MOVIES
3.1 WE BANJO 3

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EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL ALL AGES FREE

Dengue Fever MARC WALKER

NEW

Aborted, Cryptopsy, Benighted 3/22, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Black Lips, Fucked Up 4/27, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 18+
Bouncing Souls 8/17, 7 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 18+
Call Me Karizma 3/29, 7 PM, Chop Shop
The C.I.A. 3/4, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Dengue Fever 5/1, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 18+
Nora En Pure 3/1, 10 PM, Sound-Bar
Foals 4/27, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 18+
Jeffrey Foucault 5/1, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Foxing; Now, Now 4/19, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 17+
Robert Glasper Trio 3/28, 7 and 9:30 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/24, noon
Robyn Hitchcock 4/3, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Charlie Hunter & Lucy Woodward 4/26, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Mabel Kwan 2/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Lil Mosey 4/4, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall
Alice Merton 4/26, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge
Mono, Emma Ruth Rundle 6/15, 6 PM, Bohemian National Cemetery, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Moonrunners Music Festival with Amigo the Devil, Harley Poe, Possessed by Paul James, Roger Alan Wade, Black Eyes Vermillion, and more 5/4-5, 11 AM, Reggie's
Mountain Goats 5/15-16, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 17+
Old Time Relijun 5/3, 9:30 PM, Hideout
Ben Ottewell & Ian Ball 3/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Eric Prydz 3/3, 10 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Rebirth Brass Band 7/5, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Riley, Davey Muise, Michael Barr 2/21, 6:30 PM, Cobra Lounge
Rise Against, Face to Face 4/28, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Santana, Doobie Brothers 8/4, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 1/25, noon
Son Volt 4/27, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 1/25, 11 AM, 17+
Damo Suzuki's Network 5/4, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Three Cities Trio 3/10, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Tortoise 2/17, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
Tritonal 3/1, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Jeff Tweedy 3/22-23, 8 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM, 18+
The Twilight Sad 5/18, 9 PM, Sleeping Village, on sale Fri 1/25, noon
Valley Maker 5/1, 9 PM, Hideout
Vandoliers 3/8, 9 PM, Hideout
Varsity 3/22, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Ric Wilson 4/13, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+
Yheti 5/3, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

UPDATED

Jawbox 7/27-28, 7:30 PM, Metro, 7/27 sold out, second show added, on sale Fri 1/25, 10 AM
John Moreland 4/6, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, late show added, early show sold out

UPCOMING

Acid Mothers Temple, Yamantaka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Aesthetic Perfection 10/5, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Herb Alpert & Lani Hall 5/4-5, 8 PM, City Winery
American Football 3/30, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Alec Benjamin 4/23, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall
Beths 3/6, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Black Moth Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Black Queen, Uniform 3/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Body/Head 3/7, 7:30 PM, Art Institute of Chicago
Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/4, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Kasey Chambers 1/31, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music
Cher, Nile Rodger & Chic 2/8, 8 PM, United Center
Cherry Glazerr 2/23, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Chicago Open Air with System of a Down, Tool, Ghost, Prodigy, Meshuggah, Gojira, Beartooth, and more 5/18-19, SeatGeek Stadium, Bridgeview
Daughters, Blanck Mass 3/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Dead & Company 6/14-15, 7 PM, Wrigley Field
Deerhunter 2/17, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Disturbed, Three Days Grace 3/8, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Elder Island 3/19, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Elvis Depressedly 2/28, 6 PM, Cobra Lounge
Jeremy Enigk 4/9, 8:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Fleetwood Mac 3/1, 8 PM, United Center
Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Steve Gunn, Gun Outfit 4/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Health 4/20, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge
Wanda Jackson 3/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Jerusalem in My Heart 3/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Judas Priest 5/25, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Stephen Kellogg 3/22, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
William Ryan Key 3/9, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen
King Buffalo 3/15, 9:30 PM, Hideout
King Crimson 9/10, 8 PM, Auditorium Theatre
Kiss 3/2, 7:30 PM, United Center
La Luz 3/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Le Butcherettes 2/20, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+
Jenny Lewis 3/30, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Lords of Acid, Orgy, Genitorturers 3/7, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center
Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness, Flor 3/2, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Men I Trust 2/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Kevin Morby, Sam Cohen 6/7-8, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Bob Mould Band 2/22-23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Muse, Walk the Moon 4/12, 8 PM, United Center
Kacey Musgraves 1/31, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
My Brightest Diamond 5/9, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
National Parks 4/13, 6 and 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Tom Odell 4/30, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall
Anders Osborne 2/9, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery
Jerry Paper 3/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Parcels 3/1, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Perfume 4/5, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

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Ben Pirani 3/22, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Planes Mistaken for Stars 3/6, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Procol Harum 2/20-21, 8 PM, City Winery
Radar State 2/2, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+
Rivers of Nihil, Entheos 3/5, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Todd Rundgren 4/23-24, 8 PM, Athenaeum Theatre
Travis Scott 2/21, 8 PM, United Center
Snow Patrol 5/7, 7 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Spiritualized 4/9, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+
Vince Staples, JPEGmafia 3/12, 8:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, Fri 12/14, 10 AM, 18+
Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
The-Dream 2/28, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Turnover, Turnstile 5/2, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall
Viagra Boys 3/28, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Xiu Xiu 5/17, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Yob, Voivod 3/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Yoshi Flower 2/5, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Yuri & Pandora 3/16, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Zomboy 2/8, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+
Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

SOLD OUT

Dave Davies 4/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
FKJ 5/17, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Jess Glynne 3/30, 7:30 PM, the Vic
Conan Gray 4/8, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
LP 2/8, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Massive Attack 3/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Mumford & Sons 3/29, 7:30 PM, United Center
Rainbow Kitten Surprise 2/8-9, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre
Robyn 3/6, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Lennon Stella 3/28, 7 PM, Metro
Mike Stud 2/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

BROKEN PRAYER were one of Gossip Wolf's favorite hardcore bands of the past decade. The defunct local dark punks' blistering tunes, wrapped in the lamentations of vocalist **Scott Plant**, fairly drip with deliciously febrile contempt! Since 2016 Plant has been fronting **Droids Blood**, whose lineup also includes BP drummer **Nick Donahue**. On their new self-titled tape, they vary the tempos more and even add some borderline poppy hooks, but there's also lots of grimy, slightly industrial synth gunk and bass murk—"Ceaușescu's Dream" and "Unreality" sound deranged in the best possible way. On Friday, January 25, Droids Blood play the **Burlington** with D-beat specialists Riesgo (featuring members of Sin Orden and Los Crudos), Primitive Teeth, and Compressions.

Gossip Wolf hasn't had a chance to see **Open Mike Eagle** since the rapper's brilliant homecoming set at the Pitchfork Music Festival last year—and in the meantime, he's dropped the reliably sharp, witty, and charming EP ***What Happens When I Try to Relax*** (also the first release from his new label, **Auto Reverse**). On Thursday, January 24, Mike headlines the **Empty Bottle** as part of **Ruby Hornet**'s relaunched **Digital Freshness** concert series (copresented by **Closed Sessions**). Beat-scene prince Fess Grandiose and up-and-coming rapper Ness Heads open.

The modern-funk mavens at Chicago label **Star Creature Universal Vibrations** think DJ **Kool Hersh** of the **Boogie Munsters** has a tremendous collection of funk, disco, soul, and boogie. He's put together an expansive mix of hard-to-find local tracks from 1976 through '86, and Star Creature is releasing it on cassette as ***Attack of the Chicago Boogie***. On Saturday, January 26, **Wild Prairie Vinyl & Vintage** hosts a free release party with DJ sets by Wild Prairie co-owner Alex G, Night Moves host Jesse Sandwich, Boogie Munsters DJs (Hersh, Tim Zawada, Shazam Bangles), and nightlife veteran Tone B. Nimble. **—J.R. Nelson and Leor Galil**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

Furry porn, cuckolding, and water sports

Advice on navigating consent and pleasure

Q: I'm an early 30s hetero woman in a monogamous relationship with my mid-30s hetero guy. We've been together ten years, married seven, no kids. We have a lot of fun—traveling, shared hobbies, mutual friends, etc. We have sex fairly regularly, and it's not bad. However, his primary sexual fetish and main turn-on is furry porn—namely, cartoon images. He doesn't self-identify as a furry; he doesn't have a fur suit or fursona. To his credit, he was up-front about this with me once we started getting serious. However, I think at that younger age, I conflated the emotional openness and acceptance of his sexuality with actually being satisfied with the sexual component of our relationship. He seems only marginally attracted to me, and it bums me out that his more intense sexual drives are funneled into furry porn. I feel somewhat helpless, as his fetish doesn't allow me to meet him halfway. Real-life furry action (fur suits and the like) does not interest him (I've offered). We have sex regularly, but I always initiate, and his enthusiasm is middling until we get going, at which point I think we both enjoy ourselves. But I've found that this turns into a negative feedback loop, where his lack of initial interest leads to me being less attracted to him, and so on. I consider myself a fairly sexual person, and I get a lot of pleasure out of being desired. We're talking about starting a family, and I'm scared that the pressures that come with parenthood would only make this worse. —Fretting Under Relationship Shortcomings

A: Nothing I write is going to fix this—and nothing I write is going to fix him, FURS, not that your guy is broken. He is who he is, and he had the decency to let you know who he was before you married him. But nothing I write is going to put you at the center of your guy's erotic inner life. Nothing I write is going to inspire him to initiate more (or at all) or cause him to be more enthusiastic about sex. Nothing I write is going to make your guy want you the way you want to be wanted, desire you the way you want to be desired, and fuck you the way you want to be fucked.

So the question you need to ask yourself before you make babies with this man is whether you can live without the pleasure you get from being desired. Is that the price of admission you're willing to pay to be with this man? Maybe it once was, but is it still? Because if monogamy is what you want or what he wants or what you both want, FURS, then choosing to be with this man—choosing to be with someone you enjoy spending time with, who's "not bad" at sex, but whose most passionate erotic interests direct him away from you—means going without the pleasure of being wanted the way you want to be wanted, desired the way you want to be desired, and fucked the way you want to be fucked.

Your guy was up-front with you about his sexuality before you got married. Everyone should be, of course, but so few people are—particularly people who have been made to feel ashamed of their sexuality or their fetishes or both—that we're inclined to heap praise on people who manage to clear what should be a low bar. At the time, you mistook "emotional openness" and your willingness to accept his sexuality for both sexual compatibility and sexual satisfaction. I think you owe it to yourself to be up-front with your guy before you have kids. He's getting a good deal here—decent sex with his partner and the freedom to take care of needs his partner can't meet. And you're free to ask for a similar deal—decent sex with your guy and the freedom to take care of needs he can't meet.

There's a far greater degree of risk involved in your going outside the relationship to feel desired, of course; you seeing another man or men comes bundled with emotional and physical risks that wanking to furry porn does not. This isn't an apples-to-apples comparison. But if your shared goal as a couple is mutual sexual fulfillment—and that should be every couple's goal—and if you want to avoid becoming so frustrated that you make a conscious decision to end your relationship (or a subconscious decision to sabotage it), FURS, then opening it up needs to be a part of the discussion.

Q: Please discuss cuckolding in all its forms. Also all of the emotional risks and potential sexual rewards. —A Potential Cuckoldress

A: It would take two years' worth of columns—even more—to discuss cuckolding in all its forms, unpack all the risks, and game out all the potential rewards. Since I can't possibly do that, APC, I'm going to send you to *Keys and Anklets* (keysandanklets.com), a terrific podcast dedicated to "the cuckold and hotwife lifestyle." The host, Michael C., is engaging, funny, and wise, and his interviews with cuck couples and bulls are incredibly illuminating. If you're considering entering into a cuckold relationship, you'll definitely want to start listening to *Keys and Anklets*.

Q: I'm a twentysomething woman engaged to a wonderful twentysomething man. I'm the kinky one. I've dabbled in BDSM and definitely have a taste for pain and degradation. My boyfriend, meanwhile, considers himself a feminist and struggles with degrading me. I've been very patient and settled for very vanilla sex for a couple of years now. However, every now and then, he'll joke about peeing on me when we shower together. I'm curious about water sports and would totally give it a try! I've tried to get more information from him on where these jokes are coming from, but he always changes the subject. And recently when I tried to make a joke back, I said the absolute wrong thing: "OK, R. Kelly, settle down." This was right before we watched *Surviving R. Kelly*. I'm afraid that joke may have sent any potential water-sports play down the toilet. (Pun intended!) Any advice on how to get him to open up next time he makes one of these jokes? —Wants a Totally Exciting Relationship

A: You might want to reread the first letter in this week's column, WATER, and then dig into the Savage Love archives and check out the thousands of →

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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS DOMESTIC RELATIONS 14TH DIVISION ADELAIDE BUCK PLAINTIFF VS CASE NO: 60 DR 2018-4680 DAVID ROLON DEFENDANT WARNING ORDER The Defendant, David Rolon, is hereby warned to appear in the Circuit Court of Pulaski County in Domestic Relations, 14th Division, 401 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201 within thirty (30) days and answer the Complaint of the Plaintiff, Adelaide Buck, and upon failure of Defendant to do so, the Complaint filed herein will be deemed to be admitted. WITNESS my hand and seal as Clerk of the Circuit Court of Pulaski County, Arkansas, this 9TH day of January, 2019. (1/31)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000321 on January 11, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of APARTMENT TWO with the business located at: 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE APT. #2, CHICAGO, IL 60612 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JOSEPH BOTTIGLIERO 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE APT. #2 CHICAGO, IL 60612, USA (1/31)

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VALENTINE'S DAY ISSUE

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SAVAGE LOVE

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letters I've responded to from people who failed to establish basic sexual compatibility before marrying their partners. Settling down requires some settling for, of course, and everyone winds up paying some price of admission. But sexual compatibility is something you want to establish before the wedding, not after.

At the very least, WATER, don't marry a man to whom you can't make simple observations about sex and ask simple questions about sex. Like this statement/question/statement combo: "You joke about peeing on me, and I want to know if you would actually like to pee on me, because I would like to be peed on." Pissing on you doesn't make him R. Kelly, a man who has been credibly accused of raping underage girls and sexually and emotionally abusing—even imprisoning—adult women. If R. Kelly had raped numerous women and girls in the missionary position, WATER, all the other men out there who enjoy sex in the missionary position wouldn't have become rapists by default. Where there is consent—enthusiastic consent—then it, whatever it is (missionary position sex, peeing on a partner), isn't abusive. Sex play involving pain or degradation often requires more detailed conversations about consent, of course, but jokes and hints are a shitty way to negotiate consent for any kind of sex. Always go with unambiguous statements ("I would like to be peed on") and direct questions ("Would you like to pee on me?").

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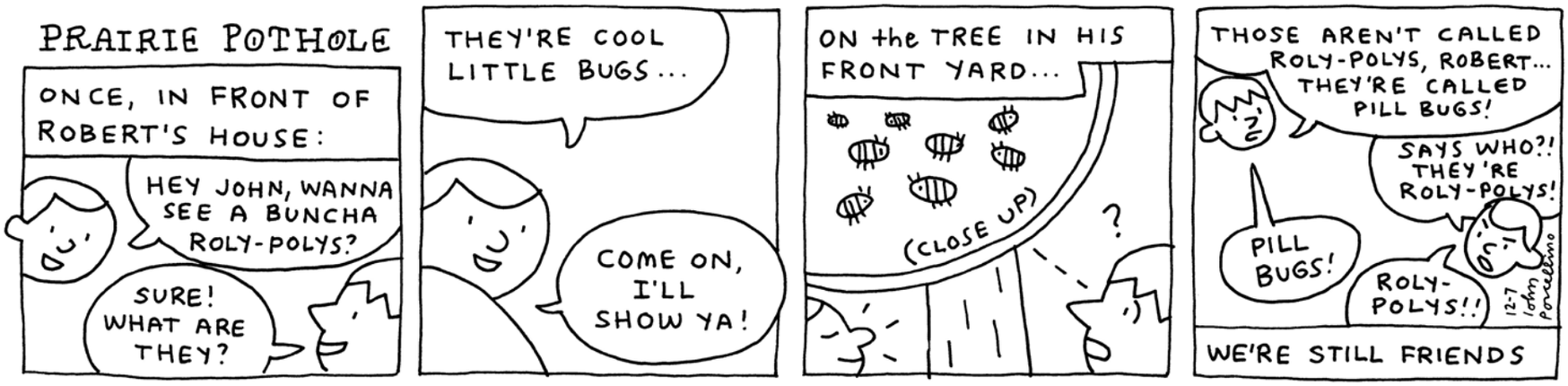

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